

THE ADVENTURES AND ANTICS OF THE LEVESQUE SISTERS
(1914-17)

James C. Burke

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CHAPTER ONE

THE LEVESQUE SISTERS

Our previous summer journals were a faithful record of our marvelous escapades, laughable missteps, sundry musings, and relentless mental acrobatics which we prudently decided to suspend after our epics mysteriously found their way into the hands of Mrs. Melvin Keane, household tyrant and celebrated expert on all things nonexistent. Happily, our hiatus from writing about ourselves could only endure so long despite the omnipresent eye of the Snallygaster. Having braved a perilous journey of five blocks in the company of our valiant champions Frank and Louis, we sallied forth *en masse* into the stationery shop with change purses unsheathed. Victory! The proprietor bargained away his glorious leather-bound volume of blank paper. Returning home with our prize, each one of us took a solemn oath to protect it from rapacious hordes of pixies. [Myrna!]

Alrighty, for the last two years, we attempted to keep journals, but [our self-appointed governess] Mrs. Keane has a talent for finding them. Certainly, her “little friends” [the household staff] are whispering in her ear. She doesn’t approve of us preserving a record of our “unseemly antics.” What would people say? I can’t imagine what she means. Our antics are very ladylike. Despite having our prior work confiscated, we are starting a new collaborative journal; but first, a brief introduction. [Hello, Imaginary Ladies, I’m Ella.]

Greetings! Glorious Ladies somewhere up the road, we are the Levesque Sisters: Ella Collene and Myrna Eloise, ages, twenty-two and twenty respectively; both orphans; the last direct descendants of Captain Jacques Levesque, celebrated mariner, owner of a coastal steam packet, and railroad speculator – legend has it that he did not speak French. His progeny were landlubbers: the family business transitioned to railroading exclusively. The current Levesque patriarch is the superintendent of his railroad company since 1883, and the directors occasionally appoint him president *pro tem* when the need arises. He also holds a sizable portion of shares, mostly inherited. Counting those willed to us girls by our parents, the collective position of the Levesque heirs amounts to a controlling interest in the company. Imagine that! After eighty years of judicious investment, strategic marriages, and steadfast participation [also called “working”], harsh fate funneled the industry of several generations into the care of an administrator for two eccentric maidens, the presumptive corporate matriarchs – goodness!

We started off cousins. Henry George Levesque, nephew of Mr. James Levesque, Sr., was my father. He married Collene Gwendolyn Hennessy, big sister of Chief Inspector Roscoe Rufus Hennessy. She succumbed to pneumonia when I was five. After my father died from injuries that he received from crashing his motorcar into an old oak tree, Uncle Roscoe brought me to Port Unity to live with him. Seeing that my uncle was not prepared to assume the role of guardian to a teenaged girl, Mr. Levesque invited me to live in his house and be Myrna’s companion. Mrs. Keane, the “general manager” of the household, prematurely rejoiced. She assumed my role was guiding my cousin back to more ladylike diversions. Far from it! Myrna, then eleven, was beginning to become enamored with machines, and taking them apart was integral to the affection. I saw nothing wrong with it, nor did her grandfather. After she welcomed me into her basement workshop to join in the fun, he had two “handy ladies” tinkering. In time, we became inseparable, so Mr. Levesque decided to adopt me; thus, bringing the last surviving heirs of the Levesque family legacy under the same roof. I refer to Myrna as my sister, disregarding technicalities. [There are

some differences between us: Ella is beautiful, having blue eyes, flaxen hair, not too tall, and getting messy doesn't come as effortlessly; she is serious-minded whereas I am rambunctious and silly.]

Superintendent James Edward Levesque, Sr. is jovial and relaxed at home, enjoying frequent conversations with his old cronies such as Edmund McNair, Elbert Skinner, and Georges Deschamps – none of them speak or read French. He plays the piano well, and his skill at sightreading is exceptional. Home is a pleasant and sometimes silly place because Mr. Levesque knows when to set aside time for himself. Like Myrna, he juggles different personae: a delightful grandfatherly person at home; at work, he is an exacting taskmaster; and in the world without, a force to reckon with. Perceiving the utility of instilling confidence in his girls, he encourages our tomboy interests despite the tyranny of orthodox assumptions. [Completing the domestic assortment is Mrs. Melvin Keane, a lady of sorts: perpetually irritable, quarrelsome, and sanctimonious. Though convinced that mischievous sprites occasionally infest the neighborhood and treacherous lizard birds are nesting in our basement, Granddaddy James thinks she is exceptionally good at managing the business of the household so we must tolerate her unappealing attributes. Good enough.]

Though Granddaddy James and our household tyrant Mrs. Keane raised me, Mr. McNair, Major Durant, Mr. Elbert Skinner, and Mr. Georges Deschamps, all cronies of my grandfather going back to the old days, were always at hand to fill the gaps, teaching me useful skills such as drafting, carpentry, trigonometry, and playing poker. Mr. McNair's grandboys Frank and Louis take me along on their adventures, including trips to the sound to dig clams. It is wonderful fun! I also pick up practical mechanical skills from them; and as of late, I help when they repair their motorcar. Presently, I am assigned to the Engineering Department at corporate headquarter studying under Mr. McNair. Want to hear a story? Don't be silly; of course, you do – ha-ha-ha!

CHAPTER TWO

ANTICS, 1914-15

Hello, Glorious Ladies, it's me: Myrna Eloise Levesque, that twenty-going-on-twenty-one exceptionally tall near-sighted strange girl with the unruly brunette tresses who thinks keeping a record of our fascinating exploits might serve a beneficial purpose at some point in the future – ha-ha-ha! (Uh-huh, I'm a chatterbox!) Here are some final drafts of our most memorable antics from the past. We hid them in the basement concealed within a steel lockbox labeled "Snallygaster Eggs."

Commencement debacle

I graduated from Mrs. Osbourne's Academy for Young Ladies in 1914 – hurrah! Mr. Hennessy and Ella came to the commencement ceremony. It was hot; the preacher was long-winded; and the speaker was an "expert" on health who lectured on the virtues of modern furnishings. I was wise enough to tie back my hair in a ponytail. The heat started working on my tangles upon setting foot in the hall. All the graduating girls had to wear white high-collar dresses, white hats, and hold a bouquet of white lilies, perfectly attired for our coffins. Maternal duty framed the speaker's lecture [or advertisement]. Overstuffed chairs, heavy curtains, and carpets are unsanitary. We need contemporary [*colonial style*] furnishings, washable gauze curtains, and ceramic tiled floors. [*What?*] The more sunlight that gets in, the better. It cleanses the household atmosphere for our babies. [*Babies?*] Ella couldn't contain a laugh, so she excused herself. Mr. Hennessy was looking at something on the ceiling. It was getting oppressively hot! The girl next to me started to faint. With a class of eleven, I should remember her name, but she seldom spoke. [*Her name is Veronica Ogle!*] Hmm, right, I held Veronica up until Mrs. Osbourne motioned to carry her into the wings. Uh-huh, enough of that; I took her out for some air! She revived, but I persuaded her to stretch out under a shade tree. Fanning her with my hat helped. Mr. Hennessy and Ella arrived thereafter with a pitcher of water and several glasses commandeered from the reception table. The girl's father [*Hilbert Ogle*] came out next with a brimming wash pail and towel. The mother [*I didn't get her name*] took her place on stage to accept the diploma. [*It was her duty! Duty-duty-duty!*] After soaking the towel, he draped it over the poor girl's bare head. Before making a quick exit across the yard with his mortified offspring, Mr. Ogle told Mr. Hennessy that he had two wonderful daughters – ha-ha-ha! Ella grinned. By this time, my white dress had grass stains and my hair was soaking. "Sir, let's go home." I forgot my diploma, but it arrived in the mail the next Tuesday. Good enough! It was time to start my apprenticeship.

The gentlemen who complicate our lives

Mr. Oscar Milton Buchanan is the administrator of the estates of James Edward Levesque, Jr., and his cousin Henry George Levesque. A longtime confidant of Granddaddy James, he is chief attorney for the railroad, Roscoe Hennessy's immediate superior, and designated manager of our academic and practical education. His daughter Elizabeth is Mr. Hennessy's inevitable fiancée though he is unwilling to acknowledge it – ha-ha-ha!

Uncle Roscoe assumed his position at the railroad's corporate headquarters in 1909. Born to an old southern family, educated at the best schools, teaching courses in a military academy at twenty-two, the company commissioned him to write a procedural manual for their railroad

detectives and station police in 1905. Company Attorney Oscar Buchanan and Major Richard Durant persuaded the Board of Directors to create an administrative position for him, the Chief Inspector – family connections helped. He is neither an experienced soldier nor lawman, but a superb scholar of both professions. Mr. Buchanan tasked him with overseeing our practical education.

Uh-oh, it's Mrs. Keane!

My childhood romps within the neighborhood always included impromptu visits to the Durant household. His children Jack and Lise were my playmates, along with Mr. McNair's grandsons, the adventurers. The Major entertained us with exciting stories, footraces, and pranks. He took me to the station a few times to meet the officers. Mrs. Keane didn't approve of my initiation into the big boys' club. Why not? They had all the best toys! The secrets of their "society" explained everything: making electricity with magnets, shaping metal with fire, moving heavy things with boiling water, and winning at poker. She knew nothing of such devilry but was an expert when it came to pixies – they're everywhere! That a devout church lady so readily embraced pagan superstition chagrined my grandfather to no end. "Play along, girl; she thinks pocket-size troublemakers overrun the world. If even such creatures ever lurked about, housecats made short work of the lot long ago." She claimed to have glimpsed them out the corner of her eye. "Sometimes people see what they want to see."

Goodness! Our household tyrant and Major Durant wrangled after he took me out to meet the new sergeant. Phillip Quince is nice, smart, and particularly dashing. Officers Albert McComber and Billy Hubbard wanted him to challenge me to a footrace on the strip of railroad land between the residences on the north side of Rose and the inclined plane. The roads leading to the bridges at Fourth and Sixth cut through the wide strip with a sandy path connecting them. Otherwise, it's wild scrub. The Major decided to make the competition more challenging. He wanted all three to race with me between the bridges and back – that is four of us together at the same time. Uh-huh, somebody was going to end up in the thistles. Not me. On go, I sprinted out ahead of the fellows while they struggled to pass one another. Reaching Sixth Street, I turned back, dodging each one as they encountered me. Soon, the officers trailed behind by half a block. "That was fun! Let's try it again." On the return, they tried to run me into the thicket. I slipped through between Albert and Billy. Mr. Quince stumbled into the scrub. He didn't step into the thistles, but the poor fellow picked up a heap of sand spurs. This time, I outdid them by the length of a full block. "One more time!" They didn't want to try again. The Major told them to say goodbye for now.

"She'll be back, Mr. Quince. Oh, if you find her in a posted area, check her papers and pass. Miss Levesque works for the Chief Inspector so follow the procedural manual. No exceptions. He occasionally puts us to the test with her sister." Needless to say, he went back to the office to brush off the dust and pick off the sand spurs before resuming his duties. [*"Major" is Mr. Durant's former military rank; his corporate title is Assistant Chief Inspector. He prefers the former and established a military hierarchy of rank for the station police officers. Having gained experience as a railroad detective while working under his father, the previous Chief Detective, he is the practical counterbalance in the division.*] "Good news, Myrna. The boss doesn't want the ladies of his division mistaken for company office girls, so somebody is stopping by next week to measure you for a special uniform."

"What are they like?"

“English style, in company black with red trim and a gray jacket, and that’s all I know... oh, leather belt, buttons down the center of the skirt, gloves, boots, broad-rim hat, and pockets, plenty of pockets. That’s your heart’s desire come true, girl: plenty of pockets.” [*Myrna était tellement excite!*]

“I’m excited!” I couldn’t wait to tell Ella. Overall, it was such a fabulous afternoon. We had so much fun! Oops! Mrs. Keane was going to have a fit!

“Well, if it isn’t Major Durant! Did you have the girl digging ditches? Good Lord Almighty! Messy thing, take a bath before your granddaddy comes home!”

“She needs to get out in the air more often, your ladyship. It does wonders for a person’s general health and disposition. I strongly recommend that you try breathing fresh air exclusively.”

“Fresh air, my foot!” She growled, and then glared at me. “No amount of lady school is going to change you. What were you doing?”

“Nothing I wouldn’t do, ma’am: strolling with the Major; visiting with the officers; meeting Sergeant Quince; and we had a footrace. I won!” Mrs. Keane shook her head.

“Major, you old men are a bad influence! Mr. McNair and his grandboys put ideas into her head about tinkering with machines; Elbert Skinner showed her how to fire up a locomotive; and now you are getting her excited about police work. Mr. Deschamps teaching her sleight-of-hand and cards seems mighty tame now! Why can’t you overgrown schoolboys take her to the opera house to see the shows? That’s how gentlemen entertain young ladies.” I winked at Major Durant. He groaned.

“Superintendent Levesque wants us to teach her everything about the business and that includes things you might consider unseemly. He’ll tell you! We’re not entertaining her.” [*Not intentionally.*]

“Well, can you teach without getting her messy?”

“No! Besides that, you’re exaggerating; except for dusty boots, she looks neat enough to be promenading about the neighborhood. Your standards of tidiness are unrealistic!” Seeing Major Durant and Mrs. Keane have-at-it was entertaining; but after having an exciting afternoon, I was hungry! “Don’t worry about this girl. She’s as fine a lady as you’ll ever meet, smart, even-tempered, and nice, everything you’re not. In time you’ll see.” What? “You’ll see.” He paused to scrutinize me. I smiled. He cleared his throat. Mrs. Keane glared at him.

“What will I see, Major?”

“You don’t have to wait long, your ladyship, next week, at earliest! The transformation will astound you. Miss Ella is getting one, too. Tell her, Myrna.” Mrs. Keane tightened her lips.

“What is the Major giving you?” I said the first thing that came to my mind.

“A dog.”

“No! Two unruly girls with dogs! Major, you’re determined to drive me to the grave.”

“That’s the best news I’ve heard all day!” Goodness! “My automobile is up the street. Which cemetery?” Ha-ha-ha!

“Those girls don’t need dogs!”

“What’s wrong with dogs? They provide companionship and protection! I’m giving them two of those woolly hundred-pound white sled-dogs with loud barks and sharp teeth.” What have I done? “Together, they will gobble up all those pesky leprechauns infesting the neighborhood in no time. As for that pterodactylus nesting underground, those boys will sniff that lizard-bird out in a heartbeat, dig her out no matter how deep, and rip the filthy critter into bloody shreds – take care of the eggs, too! So, you think those girls don’t need dogs? You’ve had all these years to fix the

problem, and it's only getting worse. Just the other night, my officers chased a web-footed spiny minotaur out of the machine shop in the upper yards. It slipped back into the swamp opposite the mill creek." This discussion had to stop. I sat down on the steps and started taking off my boots. Mrs. Keane was horrified.

"Myrna what are you doing?"

"You told me to take off my boots before going inside; I had better start that bath. Granddaddy James is not going to wait for me to get prettied-up. Sometimes, I am pretty!"

"Well, your ladyship, it's getting a little late for that drive to the cemetery, but I'll be more than happy to take you tomorrow. That gives you plenty of time to make your peace. After you're settled in, I'll bring by the dogs, and we'll do some hunting." He tipped his hat, and then winked at me after she turned. Over dinner, I told Granddaddy James that the Major was giving us some good hunting dogs. He thought it was grand. All the color drained from Mrs. Keane's face. He then threw us for a loop. "When you girls finish up college, we'll get your hounds, but in the meanwhile, I want a retriever to keep in the house." College? Ella looked puzzled. "They're loyal, good-natured, protective, and sleep when nothing is happening. I admit, some shed everywhere, and others are big eaters." Mrs. Keane gasped. Wonderful! "Like all puppies, they'll chew on everything, but it is better to get one while you girls are around so there isn't a problem when you come home for the summer." Mrs. Keane was trembling.

The Major was going to tell Mrs. Keane about our uniforms but Myrna inadvertently gave him a prompt to start jousting. He is not giving us dogs. As for Mr. Levesque, I'm not sure. I seriously tried to imagine a scenario where our day-to-day lives included leprechauns, pterodactyls, two woolly sled dogs, minotaur, retriever puppy, and Myrna's rumored pet alligator. It would be the epitome of mayhem! [I do not have a pet alligator.]

Major Durant is the person willing to confront Mrs. Keane and he does so with relish. Granddaddy James ignores her. Other than her efficient management of the household, I cannot fathom why he endures her imperious behavior. She lords over her crew of servile hirelings – maids, washwoman, cook, gardener, handyman – and haggles with the greengrocer, the dairyman, the iceman, the coal merchant, then berates men who deliver their goods. She even argues with the mailman! Fortunately, most days we are elsewhere during the worst of it. However, her "ladyship" determines what and when we eat! After she leaves for the day, we seize control of the kitchen and pantry, baking trays of cookies, frying chicken, churning ice cream, and brewing tea, the "devil's drink for women." Our bedrooms are not a refuge from her fury, nor are they inviolable. The dietary constable and her pixies search them for contraband: ginger snaps, chocolates, and – oh no! – tins of sardines. My cache of ginger snaps is in a large steel lockbox in my room, padlocked to the radiator. I painted "Danger" in bold lettering on the lid. Eventually, Mrs. Keane wanted to know what I was keeping in my room. I told her cookies. She didn't believe me. "Is it going to get loose?" We store our wicked tea in my workshop, the only place she fears to tread. Aside from the unthinkable: the likelihood of soiling her immaculate shoes with sawdust, grease, and paint pigment (the most horrid substance of all), the McNair boys and I cursed the place by displaying our terrifying trophy. We shot and stuffed a Snallygaster! It is a *papier-mâché* gargoyle. Oops!

So, what is a Snallygaster? According to Mrs. Keane, our resident scholar on folklore, superstition, and tidiness, it is a large bird with one giant eye, alligator teeth, and giant talons, ten times the size of a buzzard. They eat chickens and small children but have been known to feast on cattle and hogs. She said they glide through the night sky in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio, but migrate south to nest in cellars and church steeples. Granddaddy James said that she was

describing a chimera. Mr. Hennessy has a book that explains everything, but it's all in French! [*Tu ne peut toujours pas le lire.*] Still, some of his other books have photographs and drawings of these chimeras, also called gargoyles. They are ugly rascals, so somebody thought it was a clever idea to carve up a carload of them to decorate cathedrals. Wouldn't it be grand to have some on our front porches? Wonderful! Frank thought so, too. There was plenty of wallpaper scraps, paste, wire, lumber, and paint in their workshop. We could make a half-dozen of them. If folks really think they are the perfect addition to their fancy houses, make a mold, and then cast them in concrete – my boys are always thinking ahead. Within a few days, Frank had a set of plans. So, were European chimeras and gargoyles really American snallygasters? Mr. McNair thought Snallygaster was a brand of whiskey. Mrs. Keane's husband needs a few swigs before she comes home – ha-ha-ha! Well, we made a good one! It had scales, bat wings, long pointed teeth, and a bulging eye. We painted the body green and black with yellow for the beak except a red section like a buzzard and the teeth were yellowish white – we had a long discussion about bird teeth. Louis cut a glass disk and then painted the eye on the backside of it. Uh-huh, it was splendid. A coat of lacquer finished it nicely. We were so proud! After it dried out thoroughly, I wanted to show it off to Granddaddy James so the three of us toted it down the street. When Mrs. Keane opened the front door, her eyes bulged. "Look what we caught! Don't worry, it's stuffed." She went screaming through the house. Granddaddy James thought it was funny. He wanted it set up in his library as a conversation piece. "It must be off to the side so nobody can see it until they were at the center of the room." What about the ceiling? Uh-huh, that was perfect! All it took was wire and some eye screws. So, where was Mrs. Keane? We looked around the house, inside and out. Granddaddy James found her cowering in a closet babbling about the terrible deed we perpetrated. He told her it was nothing more than a sculpture of paper, paste, and paint molded around a wire frame. That was it... until she entered the library. So much for our conversation piece. Drats! I hung it up in my bedroom. Drats again! Granddaddy James was getting tired of all the screaming. Frank and Louis helped me mount it on the basement wall. She doesn't go plundering down there, well, not anymore.

Even though Mrs. Keane knew it was a sculpture, the sight of it terrified her. I find that intriguing. We suspend disbelief while watching plays, otherwise it wouldn't be entertaining. Myrna's sleight-of-hand tricks employ misdirection not upending natural law, yet they still amaze the scientifically inclined. For the superstitious and child-minded hidden unnatural forces and substances permeate the natural world; and at times, can intermingle with it. The manmade representation of a real or imaginary being can serve as a vessel for the invisible essence of the creature. The gargoyles on cathedrals are more than ornamentation. They are the unseen predators of the world gathered outside the threshold of the temple. [Uh-huh, she reads too many philosophy books.]

Lavender Liz

Elizabeth Buchanan is a complication that the gentlemen want us to emulate. She is two years older than me, a flawless beauty of the most disconcerting variety, adept at the necessary social skills requisite for an existence in the public eye, extremely intelligent, follows instructions to the letter, and strives for perfection in everything. I can't stand her! Nevertheless, we must work together; and on occasions pretend to be the best of friends when Uncle Roscoe places us on display. Usually, we perform our roles without friction but occasionally she cannot constrain her natural propensity for playing mean tricks. I can think of more than one instance in the not so distant past where she seized the opportunity to place me in an awkward position. To dissuade her

from further pranks I came up with something subtle: mixing several strong-smelling floral perfumes together and then pouring the concoction into an atomizer. It's awful! The purpose was to create a false trail of noxious gladiolus, lavender, and lilac every place Liz frequented. To get the fellows accustomed to it, I sprayed some droplets on the doorknobs to their lavatories, and a little squirt in the hallway leading to her office. I have seen them sniffing their palms and grimacing! Spraying a few droplets of my fleurs du cimetière inside her desk drawers ensured that everything she touched acquired the overpowering bouquet. In time, the fellows in the Legal Department were getting perturbed. The anteroom in Uncle Roscoe's office was the obvious source. Mr. Buchanan was diplomatic: he thought the fragrance was "delightful" but suggested Liz stop using it. "The whole floor smells like a flower shop; furthermore, somehow, it is getting on the men, and they are having difficulties explaining it." I could imagine! She blamed me. Without continuing the discussion, he returned to his office. For the next week, Uncle Roscoe told me to carry his paperwork to the Legal Department. "Liz is in quarantine." [Ha-ha-ha!]

During our apprenticeships in the family business, Mr. Hennessy assigns us to different departments at corporate headquarters to receive training in the diverse aspects of railroading. There has never been any doubt in our minds that we want to work for the company – after all, we were born deeply invested in it – but Mr. Buchanan is concerned that he might lose his precious matriarchs to another department. [*Especially you.*] Therefore, we spend a good portion of our summer doing something for his Legal Department [*like assisting Major Durant*]. Still, the Engineering Department needs me for a few weeks of drafting. [*Uncle Roscoe is also our designated "keeper" when necessity demands that we must be in the public eye.*]

A practical demonstration

Since beginning my apprenticeship, Mr. McNair has kept me busy with all sorts of wonderful projects, not essential, but intriguing, much of it pertaining to past improvements in Unity Terminal for which few records survive. Of particular interest to me for peculiar reasons is the above ground burnt-out ruins of the old paint shop. It is located on the north boundary of the passenger yard between discontinuous Second and Third. These streets exist on both sides of the terminal but do not pass through it. During the 1870s, the company manufactured freight cars for the several connecting lines in the region. At the time, Unity Station was located between Eighth and Ninth streets in the upper yards and a cluster of workshops occupied the present-day passenger yard. In addition to the locomotive shop, foundry, and roundhouse, there were shops for car assembly, rail mending, machining, carpentry, and painting. Of these, only the ruins of the latter remain. It is a substantial structure with two-foot-thick brick walls resting upon a foundation of rough-cut gneiss block, twenty-four by sixty feet. There are arched openings on the east and west sides for bringing in cars for painting. The windows opening on the long sides are bricked in. Originally the shop had a timber and slate roof, but the fire destroyed it. The chief reason why the company is hesitant to pull it down is the possibility that it might be useful again at some point in the future. Being well to the side, clear of the array of passenger yard tracks, the picturesque ruins are not in the way or an obstacle to planned improvements; and upon inspection, judge to be structurally sound. As a child, I admired this building through Granddaddy James' telescope in the belvedere. Always desirous of making a close examination, I frequently went out on the pedestrian walkway on the Fourth Street Bridge to view it from above. It was too dangerous to cross the tracks in the passenger yard to explore it but walking the footpath down the embankment on the north side of the bridge

brought me to the wooden fence separating Haynes Street from the rear of the ruins. Finding a place with a few boards missing, I slipped in.

Cars lined up on the northernmost tracks in the yard provided a blind making it easy to evade the watchmen and station officers. The walk leading from the locomotive shop to the upper yards that they must use is situated on the opposite side of the tracks, so they are not inclined to cross over them to the ruins, particularly if rolling stock staged on the tracks necessitates continuing on to a safe crossing. Even so, the patrol is apt to check the ruins at least once a shift. I'm nice, a bit silly but nice, and happy most of the time except when I fall out of trees. No matter: I never fall from the same one twice – ha-ha-ha! My chief act of [*habitual*] naughtiness is exploring [*or trespassing*]. Not anywhere, just certain posted areas in the terminal. [*You are also a shameless flirt.*] Back to my story. Passing inside from one end to the other is the simplest way to avoid detection. The interior of the paint shop is impressive: partially blackened walls, twenty-two feet in height, opening to the sky; underfoot, fragments of slate tiles intermixed with compacted dirt and ash; and there is a wide-arched opening in the structural wall halfway. The rails for moving the cars through the building for painting are gone; also, crews removed the remains of the plank floor and painters' scaffolding. The vast open space reminds me of the great hall of an ancient castle or a long-abandoned rural church. Having the chance to look inside for the first time was a treat. I was excited!

On my first visit, I stayed but a moment; the second lasted much longer. Being nine years old, my imagination conjured up a vision of men hard at work on the new cars, filling the emptiness before my senses. Once home, I sketched out my glimpse into the past. Even then, I was beginning to draw crude illustrations of my fanciful exploration world. On my third visit, Captain Johnston discovered me. Oops!

"I'm caught! Are you locking up my hands in those naughty bracelets?"

"Not this time. We need them for the real trespassers, mostly fellows of all sizes, made especially strong to hold the most muscular types, but these clever contraptions adjust smaller for grownup gals. As a rule, everybody taken into custody old enough to know better, sixteen according to the procedural manual, needs the required inconveniences. Keep on playing catch-me-if-you-can until you can appreciate a good fit and we'll give you a practical demonstration, say, for at least an hour, longer if we're busy. So, are you going to come along peacefully?"

"Yes, sir." Captain Johnston could carry me under his arm because this amazon was once tiny. Mrs. Keane had a conniption when he brought me home.

Though I had permission to visit certain places in the station and Mr. Skinner let me into the locomotive shop to watch, for a few years the officers came across me unaccompanied in other posted areas throughout the terminal. More often than not they didn't catch me. It was fun! When Frank and Louis started bringing me along on their wonderful adventures my wayward escapades lost their appeal. The boys took me to places about town I didn't know existed, all within walking distance, too! Granddaddy James was satisfied that they were teaching me useful skills like drafting, carpentry, and repairing sundry machines. That's when he helped me set up a nice workshop in the basement. They cured me of exploring the terminal. [*No, they didn't!*] All the same, I never stopped thinking about my overdue practical demonstration. The opportunity unexpectedly presented itself to me during an impromptu visit to the station police office. After asking Officer Billy Hubbard to show me his shiny new *Patrolman* cuffs, I somehow ended up in them. Uh-huh, those locking bracelets definitely fit my wrists nicely, and without the special key, my hands were staying thoroughly secured, behind my back, no less! Little did I know that Ella volunteered my services as mock miscreant in her place. So?

“There; how’s that?”

“Sweet! This is certainly the best way to curtail an unruly rough-and-tumble nearly-six-foot saucy scheming gal who is apt to get into all sorts of mischief when you’re not looking.”

“I’d say! The sooner you settle down and get used to them, the better things will go. Most of our catches figure that out on their own right quick. Satisfied, or do you want to stay handcuffed?”

“I’m a dangerous brunette! More than likely I’m about to get feisty so handcuffs, absolutely.” Billy chuckled, and then pocketed the key. “Hold onto my arm...That’s it. I’m in your custody.” [*Flirt! Myrna never lets inconveniences get in the way of an opportunity.*] At that moment, Captain Johnston returned from the records room. Oops!

“Well, I’ll be, it’s Myrna Levesque! Ella came through for us again. I suppose Mr. Hubbard is your arresting officer for today?”

“Uh-huh, he caught me.”

“Excellent! The required inconveniences are appropriate this time. I’m surprised you haven’t found yourself in some sooner.”

“That’s right, sir, but this time he charmed me into a bind. These fit my wrists perfectly, definitely no slipping loose. I’m the first scamp to have her hands confined in his gleaming nickel-plated never used *Patrolman* pair – I always want to be first. Officer Hubbard had no problem with that. He used the preferred method described in the procedural manual to secure me, too. Nice! (Cops-and-robbers is my type of game.) I told him to think twice before releasing me early. Tall muscular brunettes are rumored to be dangerous! Keeping me handcuffed seemed reasonable. I didn’t mind. All the better to satisfy my curiosity about being in custody.”

“Marvelous! That’s our girl: always eager to try something new. So, do you want to earn officer training credit while appreciating the effectiveness of our unique hardware?” Hmm...

“Yes, sir! You can count on me.”

“Good show! Are you free for an hour or so?”

“Yes and no – ha-ha-ha!”

“Unquestionably! This afternoon, Officer Hubbard is taking his annual report writing examination. Let’s see whether you can drive him up a tree.”

“No problem for me: I’m a nuisance.” Oh, this is going to be fun! At that moment, an annoying fly started buzzing around my head. It landed on my ear, and then started walking over my hair. I shook him off, but he came back. I was mad! During my replies to Captain Johnston’s questions, my efforts to shake off the fly only added to my distracted appearance.

“What were you doing to get yourself arrested?”

“Aside from trespassing, I’m behaving strangely, somewhat discombobulated: that’s cause enough.”

“So, Myrna, how were you acting more strangely than usual?”

“A spiny web-footed minotaur was stalking me.”

“We’ll look into it. Take a seat on the bench.” He handed Billy several blank forms. Meanwhile, the fly was in my hair again, and I couldn’t do anything about it.

“Question her; write everything down; consider it like any arrest; and then type up a copy for Mr. Hennessy. Label it ‘Report Examination.’ The girl is a first-rate tale spinner, so she is apt to concoct all sorts of convincing crazy talk if you let her play it out so jot down what you can. Pay attention to details because the Major now grades all annual examinations. Put the original in records.” In an instant, Captain Johnston reached out and snatched the fly in midflight effortlessly. “We have a special file for Myrna Levesque. Every time the Major sent an officer out to find her,

he filled out a report. Since she's not going anywhere for a while, bring it up to date. We want this one working for us." I cleared my throat. "Unless Myrna is ready to call it quits."

"Not me, sir! I'm the 'girl with the pet alligator' who is rough-and-tumble and not afraid of anything, even that minotaur, but he's rather bullheaded and has halitosis. I have standards! Oh, have you ever been up in a hot-air balloon? That's how I escaped from Dr. Blister and his pack of carnivorous ziggurats!" Captain Johnston opened his hand, and the fly flew away.

"If I didn't know this gal, we'd be sending for the doc from the nuthouse." I giggled. "While your back there, bring me the flyswatter." Uh-oh...

Billy prepared a practice arrest report and other paperwork as though he really arrested me for trespassing, including notes pertaining to my best delusions. He even took my picture. When I finally saw it days later, my disheveled hair made me look like a wild woman. I suppose being volunteer mock miscreant is an adequate substitute for a practical demonstration since both could show me what a "grownup gal" might expect if she disregarded the rules. [*"Rules are rules, no exceptions." Uncle Roscoe expects us to follow them like everybody else. Making allowances for some employees leads to resentment amongst the others and the tendency of officers to overlook the transgressions of their favorites.*] If an officer caught me in a posted area without my documents, there wouldn't be any trespassing charges, but he must fill out a report and then escort me off company property. I could return, but only after presenting my documents.

"So, do you have your papers and pass?"

"Yes, they're in my bag. You'll have to get them because, well, I can't – ha-ha-ha! Just dump it out on your desk. As I recall, you're supposed to search it for stolen property, contraband, and dangerous items." I had a lot of things in my bag: hair ribbons, brush, pencils, sketchpad, change purse, watch, housekeys, playing cards, pretty rocks, my company papers, sundry passes, and a new Parson Bungee and Mrs. Jeeters joke. Captain Johnston perused it, and then cleared his throat.

"Who gave this to you?"

"Eavesdropping! I just had to write it down. That Parson Bungee has a way with the ladies, particularly when sweet-talking them into shedding their dresses. The best part is he knows how to go about the naughty work in the exact way the lady wants. No easy task since some like Mrs. Jeeters like novelty. Tell me about the work you want me to do?"

"Perform little scenes for my report writing examinations. While some of these are miscreant roles, in most cases you'll play passengers reporting a theft, loss of property, a hazard, or simply needing some assistance. The officers are graded on the accuracy of the reports they take. With your convoluted meandering, this will be a challenge. Otherwise, you'll organize our records and attend to any woman we arrest. I schedule these sessions on Saturdays so working here will not interfere with anything you're doing at corporate headquarters. By the way, Major Durant wants you to take the station officer training, too. That is, when you're home for the summer. Do you want to be the company's first woman station officer?"

"I always want to be first; if not the best, at least the first! Hmm, that doesn't sound right."

"The boss hopes to hire three in the fall of 1916. I understand you'll be away at college, but the Major will complete the training before then." This was a surprise!

After finishing all the necessary paperwork, Billy unlocked my cuffs. Immediately, I retrieved my hairbrush, tidied my tangles, and then tied the whole mess back in a ponytail. Captain Johnston was glad that I "volunteered," and he gave me one and a half training hours – hurrah! I still had plenty of time before dinner.

"So, are you up to being our new volunteer mock miscreant?"

"Yes, sir; you know me – ha-ha-ha! I suppose this serves as my practical demonstration?"

“How’s that?”

“Way-back-when, you promised me ‘a practical demonstration’ of the ‘required inconveniences’ when I could ‘appreciate a good fit.’ I was in them longer than an hour, too.”

“Oh, yes; I remember. That wasn’t exactly what I meant back then; now, its practical enough to give you an idea about what goes on after we bring in a catch. There are few more parts to the arrest procedure we’ll cover later in your training. For now, study your manual.”

“Yes, sir!”

“The Major says you are ‘overly high-spirited;’ all the fellows think you’re exceptionally nice and a real comic; having known you longer than most, I’d peg you as all of that plus a rambunctious, unflappable, talented, eccentric chatterbox and showoff who is too smart for her years, and wholly modern. I have some ideas about how to put all that to use on the job in ways that the boss hasn’t considered. That’s why he wants me to train you as the first.”

Billy praised my improvisation skills and was impressed that I chose to perform my role under more taxing conditions than my sister, namely, like “a real arrest.” What? When Ella plays the miscreant during these examinations, she answers the officer’s questions seated in a comfortable chair alongside the desk, no handcuffs. Why didn’t Ella tell me this? Uh-huh, you guessed it. To avoid interrogation by Mrs. Keane, I surreptitiously ventured over to the station to pester the officers on a Saturday, so Ella didn’t have the opportunity to tell me; Billy thought I was there to volunteer as mock miscreant for his examination, so when I asked to see his new handcuffs, he thought I expected to be locked in them while playing my role; Captain Johnston entered, so staying locked up for an hour or longer was fitting because that’s part of being an arrested girl, and it never crossed my mind to perform it differently. So? I got the job!

Our lucky aviator

The summer of 1914 is chocked full of novel experiences. It really started to get exciting when the celebrated aviator Cornelius Ashcraft made an unanticipated landing at Unity Bluff Station. I was there! That day, Mr. McNair had Frank and Louis take me for a drive in their Ford Model T automobile to Unity Bluff Station near the railroad bridge north of the terminal. It is nothing more than a way stop for the through overnight passenger traffic passing over the great arc to avoid going into Unity Station (it closes at midnight). Here, anybody can board or disembark while the trains are taking on coal and water. Few choose to do so since the route to town is by way of a desolate unlit dirt road precariously located on the bluff overlooking the river. More often passengers transfer to other northbound trains scheduled to split off from the main trunk at Wayne City. During the day shift, Miss Agnes Tedder manages the paperwork for the station’s meager freight yard. It is a dull job.

Having completed our assignment pertaining to the Murray-Hecke House early, Mr. McNair decided to give us additional tasks. On this particular day, we were making measurements for a new section house, that is, a workshop for the crew maintaining the track between the bridge and the place where the great arc ends in the upper yards of the terminal. That’s five miles of double track. As we were finishing, Miss Tedder directed our attention upward to a speck in the sky. Goodness! It was a flying machine! The pilot circled above us several times. I was excited! Agnes and I waved enthusiastically. On his last pass, he flew over to the opposite bank of the river, turned, and started back towards us. Wonderful! He was treating us to a display of aerial acrobatics. His machine came toward us lower and lower, and then the engine sputtered. Uh-oh, this fellow was in trouble! Louis yelled “He’s coming in!” Here we go! Everybody scattered. I dashed toward the passenger shed. Woosh! That rascal glided right over me! After landing on the service road passing

between the tracks leading into the great arc, the machine bumped along a short way, and then upended, sending the pilot tumbling to the ground. Agnes and I rushed over, took hold of his arms, yanked, and pulled, and eventually dragged him clear.

“You ladies saved my life! I could kiss you.” Good enough. I gave him a quick peck on the cheek – ha-ha-ha! Uh-huh, he sure was surprised. “Better?” He nodded. “Good! Now, her turn.” Agnes blushed. “Go ahead, girl! The fellows will be here in a moment. Don’t lose your chance.” Uh-huh, I was being a bad influence! After a moment’s hesitation, she planted a nice one on him... well, extremely nice. He sat up and put his arms around her waist. “It appears he doesn’t have any broken bones and whatnot. Oops, here come my boys!” Agnes pulled away from his embrace and proceeded to straighten her hair. “Now, both of us can boast about kissing an aviator.” Like Ella says, I never let inconveniences get in the way of an opportunity. I told Frank that our visitor appeared to be merely somewhat beat-up and winded but it’s best that he telephoned the doctor at the terminal infirmary to come on over and check him out. “Also, inform Company Attorney Oscar Buchanan about the accident, and Major Durant, and Master of Transportation Georges Deschamps, and let’s not forget about Roadmaster Harland.” In short order, the doctor and his orderly arrived in the ambulance and whisked our hapless aviator away; and a few minutes later, everybody else rushed in. Mr. Harland wasn’t sure about how to move the flying machine since he didn’t know much about them. Even so, he decided to drain its fuel, and then have his crew right it. That was easy. Thereafter, the men rolled it off to the derelict machine shop adjacent to the station. Mr. McNair plans to pull it down to make more room for his new section house. No matter: Mr. Buchanan wanted the flying machine dismantled long before then.

The next morning, an article about the aviator’s mishap appeared in the evening edition of the *Messenger*. Aside from bruises and a few scrapes, he came out of the crash with no significant injuries. “Over the next few days, the fearless pilot plans to disassemble his flying machine so it can be shipped by rail back to his workshop at Wayne City.” Wouldn’t it be grand if Agnes and her handsome daredevil reunite for something special? Her charming little cottage is a short walk from the station. I could tell by their kiss that they were made for each other! The article makes no mention of the two amorous ladies who pulled him to safety. Perhaps, it wasn’t newsworthy because the wreckage didn’t catch fire. It could have! When I asked Mr. Hennessy why he didn’t mention Miss Tedder’s bravery when he spoke with the reporter, he told me that she didn’t want the credit. She said it was me who raced headlong into the wreckage and pulled the aviator most of the way before she arrived to lend a hand. Since Superintendent Levesque’s granddaughter is supposed to be away at school, he didn’t mention either of us. [*That was Mr. Buchanan’s ongoing fib for keeping Myrna invisible to the rumor mill.*] The next morning, the *Messenger* printed an interview with our aviator. He told the reporter that he was pinned down under the collapsed wings, fearing the fuel would ignite at any moment, when a tall, strongwoman with dark hair pushed aside the debris and pulled him to safety. [*He was exaggerating!*] “When asked who this courageous lady is, Mr. Ashcraft replied, ‘I never had a chance to ask her name.’ However, when this reporter questioned several railroad men, they replied ‘The Girl,’ an employee of the railroad. However, one fellow told me ‘The Girl’ was one of Chief Inspector Hennessy’s nieces.” [*That’s funny!*] “He confirmed this in a roundabout way. ‘My niece does not have a pet alligator.’ Assistant Chief Inspector Major Richard Durant said, ‘This comes as no surprise to me. Presently, we are training exceptional young ladies from within our ranks to be our first women station police officers. Since we anticipate our candidates to be added on a gradual basis starting in the fall of 1916, our training roster remains confidential. The courage demonstrated by our lady employees during the late flying machine accident reenforces my confidence in our future plans. Now, forget about employee

chatter about this fabulous wonder girl and her pet alligator. There is no such person. That's all I'll say.' When I asked Sheriff Smallwood whether he was considering employing lady deputies, he said that he was awaiting approval from the County Commissioners. Once again, Superintendent Levesque leads the way in embracing modernity."

Fall assignments

[September 22, 1914]. It's my birthday! Hurrah! I am nineteen years old and no doubt, still growing. Drats! Mrs. Keane told me not to snag a fellow shorter than me. It would be an unlucky match; and in fact, I might unintentionally damage him. Ha-ha-ha, I'm a dangerous woman! The old meddler plucked that from thin air! Anything that doesn't fit her thinking is inherently harmful. For example, she is convinced that horseradish is poisonous. Ella is away travelling with her uncle – I never go anywhere – but she sent me a birthday card. It included a treasure map leading to my present, but the directions are written in French. Goodness! Granddaddy James gave our "empress of diet" the afternoon off so the McNair boys could spirit in my birthday cake! They churned ice cream, too! Later, Mr. McNair, Mr. Skinner, Mr. Deschamps, and the Major stopped by to join the party. It was fun! The boys gave me a new leather-bound journal. That's dandy since I filled the last one. It's hidden in a safe place. So, here we go!

The coffee incident

As of late, Ella and I are starting to assert ourselves as the ladies of the house. That is, when Mrs. Keane is not around. Baking, frying, churning, brewing, playing the phonograph, redecorating *our* rooms, moving *our* furniture, setting the table with *our* fine dinnerware and silver, and removing all her grotesque bric-a-brac to the carriage house: these are revolutionary acts. Even Granddaddy James reached the limit of his forbearance when all the coffee disappeared. He was mad! Mrs. Keane proclaimed that coffee was bad, not bad for his health, but because some preacher said that we should only look within for vigor and refreshment. My grandfather cleared his throat and said in a measured tone, "Does this preacher pay your salary?" Her eyes bulged! "No, he doesn't. Girls, do you have coffee in your secret larder?" We did. "Good! Fetch it. The first thing in the morning, telephone the grocer and tell him to double our order of coffee. If a fresh pot of it isn't on the breakfast table the next morning, you are out of a job. Let me make it clear, preachers are in the business of looking within, those of us who make the world run on time need coffee. Furthermore, the girls are grown up. What they eat or drink, when they come or go, is no longer your responsibility. If you or any of your 'personnel' plunder their cache of provisions, I consider that grounds for dismissal. Lastly, I want the name of that preacher. He needs to be set on the path to righteous pragmatism." That was it! Our goodies were safe, there was coffee at every meal, and her questionable maternal instincts were channeled towards venting her spleen on everybody else. Liz asked whether we knew why my grandfather allows Mrs. Keane to ride reign over the household. When I was little, I overheard him tell Mr. Benson about a promise he made to my grandmother to keep her on. After all these years, Granddaddy James was not forthcoming about the details of this promise, only that he cannot dismiss Mrs. Keane. Despite her strange notions and outrageous behavior, we owe her a debt of gratitude for a past act of courage that could have cost her dearly. "Like most of us, she can't be all bad." In time, he might tell me, or not. Good enough.

Cake Thieves

Myrna had a chance to act the role of a passenger reporting the theft of her property so Captain Johnston could test several station officers' skills at taking statements. In the exercise, she employed her original character Nora Anne Foote, a countrywoman from Northeast Township. It was amusing! None of the officers were able to tease out all the facts from her rambling narrative but Officer Albert McComber was so wrong it was ludicrous yet quite plausible. On a deeper level, I consider it a fascinating example of how an undisciplined mind can fit together any sundry assortment of facts into useful fictions.

"Mornin' Sheriff. I'm Nora Anne Foote, and this is Myrtle Jeanie Haugh. We're friends! Everybody in Northeast Township knows us because we cooked the best fried chicken in the county – yes, we do! – and folks say we need to set up a stand roadside to sell it, but that takes knowing all about numbers. Lizzy said, 'You'll go silly in the head playing with those numbers.' We had to learn a little bit about them anyway. The teacher at Sandyfield thought they'd be good for measuring out this and that. They are: two pinches of this; a dab of that; a mess and three-quarters of something else. That's not hard at all! We use lard like you wouldn't believe! I don't see where you can get into any trouble knowing about numbers."

"Excuse me for interrupting, ma'am, but are you here to report a crime?"

"Oh, silly me! If it's not too much trouble, we want you to track down the rascal who made off with the special cake we baked our Uncle Roscoe."

"Can you describe this rascal?"

"Yes; he's a man! I got a glimpse of him out the corner of my eye: a little fellow in a green suit. How he toted off that big cake, I don't know. The box we put it in was yay-big. The both of us carried it all the way to Haynes Town Station in a wheelbarrow. It has sweet potatoes, last year's pecans – it was a good year for pecans! My word, Granddaddy's old trees about toppled over under the load! – and raspberries, blueberries, peaches, sugar, blackberries, more sugar, a half-sack of flour, two dozen eggs – twelve is a dozen – honey, cherries, a pail of milk, some apple cider, and a half-tin of cinna-mun-mon-mun. That word trips me up."

"Where did this happen?"

"In the station."

"Where in the station?"

"Well, the ticket man at Haynes Town said that our box was too big to take into the cars, so it had to go along in baggage. I said, 'Good enough, but don't go getting it all mashed up because Uncle Roscoe and his girl Lizzy are planning a big social to announce her engagement to the boy with the new Oldsmobile *Autocrat* touring car – I forget his name – so, they need this cake.' The ticket man thought it ought to be simply fine since it was only thirteen miles without a stop. He was right! When we got here, the fellow in the baggage car said he couldn't just hand it to us. It had to go through the double-doors. We had to take our slip of paper up to the counter. I said, 'Good enough. Don't go mashing up our cake!' Up front, we turned in our slip and the gentleman in his gray jacket brought it and sat it on the counter. We peeked in the box; our cake looked so pretty; it made it through fine. You know what happened next?"

"No, ma'am."

"It was gone!"

"So, we're looking for a little man in a green suit carrying a giant cake?"

"That's what I saw out the corner of my eye, but who's to say it wasn't a pudgy gal wearing a blue dress. It happened fast! You need to be looking for the cake. It's in a hinged pine crate with rope handles. I painted 'Cake' in black on the lid."

“Alright, this is what I have: Nora Foote and Myrtle Haugh of Northeast Township reported their large fruitcake stolen. The container is a hinged pine crate with rope handles, described as three by two-and-a half by one, with the word ‘Cake’ in black lettering painted on the lid. The thief, purported to be a little man in a green suit, might have an accomplice, a corpulent woman in a blue dress. Does that sound right, Miss Foote?”

“Yes.”

“Fine. Let’s see what you have Mr. McComber.” Reluctantly, the officer handed his report to Mr. Johnston. This is what he wrote:

Nora Foot and Jeanie Hogg of Sandyfield reported having a shipment of cakes stolen from the station loading dock off the Baggage Office. The cakes come separately packed in wooden crates containing a dozen, labeled Apple, Blueberry, Blackberry, Cinnamon, Honey, Peach, Pecan, and Raspberry. The ladies described the thieves as a stout man in a brown suit and a short woman in a green dress. They drove off with the cakes in an old bureaucrat’s motorcar.

Officer McComber wasn’t listening, but I liked his report better. Just imagine the social we could have with all those cakes!

The locomotive shop

Mr. Skinner put me to work assisting his team for the *Number 435*. Built entirely in the company shops, it was the first in a series of fast, powerful, and efficient locomotives for the express trains. The project was set aside after the first trials because the board of directors decided the building of the new station took priority. It is my understanding that it is the first locomotive built in the shops since the 1850s, and the fifth in the entire history of the company. I spent long stretches of time admiring it. It was a 4-8-2 with six-foot drivers. Of course, this girl climbed all over it, too! Such a beautiful modern machine: painted glossy black with shiny brass railings and fixtures! Tender attached; it was a mechanical colossus! The cab was exceptionally spacious, being of greater length, and it had metal guards on both sides extending the length of the footplate to the tender like British locomotives.

I discovered an error in the drawings for the valve gear for both cylinders on *Number 435*. The “gear” is the linkage between the valve spindle and return crank in the Walschaerts Valve Gear system. This synchronizes the movement of the valve back and forth with the rotation of the drivers, so steam enters and exhausts from either side of the piston efficiently. Mr. Skinner had me go back to his original drawings and check the calculations. They were correct; but upon making measurements of the actual components of the gear, I discovered that the union link between the combination lever and the crosshead arm was three-eighths of an inch off, an error somebody made in drawings sent to the machinists while the locomotive was under construction. [*What is she talking about?*] The valve spindle above the piston cylinder moves forward and backwards over openings allowing steam to enter and exhaust on both sides of the piston. The eccentric crank attached to the main crank on the wheel moves the stem of the valve spindle back and forth by way of the eccentric rod and an assemblage of interconnected levers – I’ll refrain from listing all of them – and the union link connects the valve stem and combination lever on the crosshead where it connects to the shaft of the piston. The reach rod connected to the reverse shaft crank of the gear makes the locomotive move in reverse by changing the starting position of the spindle, so steam enters the opposite side of the piston first, but the gear does not move in reverse. The radius rod, controlled by the reverse shaft arm, connects to the valve stem and combination lever, thus

positioning the spindle. [*Stop while you're ahead.*] I helped repair a locomotive! [*Myrna certainly likes tinkering.*] The machine shop made the two corrected union links, and the mechanics installed them in a half-hour while Mr. Skinner and I watched. It was exciting! [*When is Myrna not excited?*]

Tomorrow is my last day in the locomotive shop. I return to the records room in the station police office on Friday. [*Good!*] This year is going by too fast! I am learning so many fascinating things, having my own adventures, and pestering the fellows at every turn. We have a pot of tea brewing – ha-ha-ha!

The watchman's clock

We had a meeting with Uncle Roscoe at nine o'clock. He gave Myrna her credentials and bestowed upon her the meaningless title of "Administrative Assistant to the Chief Inspector" including a badge engraved with the same. That was Mr. Oscar Buchanan's idea. She needed an administrative position. We had our picture taken with his doctrinaire daughter Liz to commemorate the occasion, and then it was off to see the Major. Upon entering the station, Myrna was amusing.

"Oh, I finally get to see your new office furniture! Yes, nice; and there's the telephone!" Captain Thad Johnston, seated at the desk, dropped his pencil. I gave him a broad smile. "Good morning, sir. Did you miss me?"

"You look vaguely familiar. Give me a clue."

"We used to meet at the ruins of the old paint shop." He put his head in his hands and groaned.

"Yes, Miss Myrna, I remember you well, and the carloads of abuse Mrs. Keane heaped on me for not catching you sooner."

"That's funny. My grandfather was surprised it didn't take longer." He laughed, and then took a watchman's round clock from his desk drawer.

"What's this?"

"A clock."

"What kind of clock?"

"A round clock."

"Alright. How do you use it?"

"I have no idea."

Captain Johnston explained the duties of the nightwatchmen and how the round clock structured their regular movements in designated areas of the terminal. Myrna knew this but did not realize that the round clock kept a daily record of these movements on a paper disk.

I have never given much thought to the particulars involved with being a night watchman. Who does? Captain Johnston brought out a watchman's clock to explain the general reasoning behind setting up the rounds. The clock, also called a round clock (it happens to be round, too) is a tool for recording time and location. The officer supervising the watch has a special key to wind and set it. In the back, he places a special disk of paper printed with twenty-four-hour markings for that day's watch and on the top of the clock is a slot to insert punch keys. The paper disk rotates in synchrony with the clock, so when the watchman inserts the punch key, it leaves an indentation on the disk. Punch keys hang from chains at all the "stations" on the watchman's rounds. Each leaves the impression of a different letter of the alphabet on the disk, thus providing a record of what time the watchman was at each station. His duties include locking doors after business hours, reporting fire, broken water pipes, other damage, and unauthorized goings-on. He can use any telephone box to report to the shift supervisor on duty. Oh, yes, that telephone! Port Unity Station

Building has four nightwatchmen, each takes an hour on the hour to complete a round. Their shift is twelve hours, beginning at six o'clock in the evening.

"So, when do you want me to start?"

"Start what?"

"Being a night-watch-lady!" He shook his head.

"No."

Spring, 1915

After having me work through the winter in the station police office, Mr. Hennessy decided to give me a new assignment.

"Good morning, sir."

"What's in your skirt pockets?"

"Well, various things."

"Like what?"

"Let's see. Oh, it's... quite a bit." He placed a small wooden box on the edge of his desk. "Right, sir, in the box." He nodded. "Well, a deck of cards, change purse, ginger snaps, pencils, hair ribbons, brush – I need that – a tin of sardines, gum eraser, housekeys, measuring tape, a folded note, it says 'And Parson Bungee took Mrs. Jeeters into his parlor and' goodness! – Where did that come from? – screwdriver, scissors, needle and thread, a card of buttons, slide ruler, a keepsake cigar from Frank, and a ball of twine. There!"

"Is that all?"

"In my skirt pockets. Hmm, just my skirt pockets. Alrighty, jacket pockets: my watch with the long guard chain, teaspoon, opera glasses, lockpick set, a bottle of perfume Liz gave me."

"Don't you dare open that in here!" Ha-ha-ha! "No! Not in the box! Carefully, put it back in your pocket and 'accidently' lose it down the nearest storm drain. Not a single hint of that horrid substance can escape into the atmosphere. Go!"

"Yes, sir! Back in a moment." It was perfume but not Ella's *fleurs du cimetière*. Upon my return from the sidewalk, Liz gave me an exasperated look but said nothing. Uh-huh, she'd get me back eventually.

Automatic signals and switches

Picture a certain bespectacled overly high-spirited nearly six-foot nineteen-going-on-twenty brown-eyed brunette with unruly coils piled atop her head sitting at a drafting table in the Engineering Department at the railroad's corporate headquarters – ha-ha-ha!

Surprise! Granddaddy James thought I needed to become familiar with all the new electric signals and improved switches that the company installed in the yards. We have automatic semaphores with electric motors! Do you want to know how they work? Uh-huh, so do I!

The two-week introductory course covers many fascinating topics: track circuits, relays, rheostats, junction boxes, transformers, motors, generators, circuit controllers, track instruments, batteries, voltage, wattage, amperage, direct current, alternating current, interlocking machines, semaphore home (home means stop or proceed), semaphore distant (distant means caution or clear), disk home block signal, disk distant block signal, Morse telegraph circuits between block stations, bell circuits for manual block stations, two-lever dwarf interlocking machines, and more. Frank quizzes me on the glossary of contraptions. The circuit diagrams are mystifying so my learning strategy is redrawing them. I never realized that some signals worked automatically

without anybody at the controls! There are battery boxes everywhere in the terminal (some underground) and a new crossing bell at Eighth Street!

“What’s this, Myrna?”

“That’s a double slip switch with movable point frogs.”

“Very good! What’s this?”

“Let me think. There we have an outside-connected facing lock and switch fitting with bolt lock, and there is the rocker shaft.”

“So, what is this diagram?”

“A telephone!”

“What kind of telephone?”

“I have no idea.”

“It’s a telephone for block stations. There’s the ringing key. What’s in this picture?”

“Three crossing bells with relay boxes. I like the one in the middle with the decorative wrought iron base and finial! The ‘Railroad Crossing’ sign is a nice touch.”

In the afternoon, Mr. McNair has one of the fellows take me out into the yards to examine all these marvels. Their purpose is to maximize the flow of traffic safely. I love it, particularly the out-of-doors instruction.

Misdirection

I am back at Unity Station with Ella, the Major, and ... Captain Johnston! Hurrah!

“Myrna Levesque, well, it’s about time.”

“That’s right, sir; it’s me again, ha-ha-ha! Did you ever catch that little man in the green suit who stole our special sweet potato-pecan-raspberry-blueberry-honey-peach-blackberry-buttery-apple cider-sugar cake?”

“Let me think. No. What have you been doing over at corporate headquarters?”

“Learning about the automatic block system electrics. I can change lightbulbs in semaphores!”

“That doesn’t surprise me. What else?”

“I can also fix your telephone.”

“I’m sure of that, but for now, take a seat until your sister comes back from her meeting with the Chief Inspector. I don’t have any work lined up for you just yet.” After hanging up my uniform hat and jacket, I unbuttoned my sleeves and returned to Captain Johnston’s desk.

“Now, watch this. Nothing up this sleeve, and nothing up this sleeve except this spoon. Where did that come from? Well, is there anything else? No. Now, I press both my hands together lightly like so, and *voila*, a new pack of cards. Do you want to play poker?”

“Now you’re talking: seven cards; shuffle, cut, and deal one-handed!”

“Uh-huh; and alternating left and right. That’s easy. How’s that? Split the deck and now lightning-fast shuffle-cut-shuffle, one-handed in both hands, double fans become one. Nice! I have long dexterous fingers giving me a wide span, so the deck sets right in my palms. Shuffle-cut-shuffle, now, the deck is back together; close my eyes; you cut, then I deal, open eyes and done. Let’s play!” He chuckled.

“That’s marvelous!”

“Pulling out the spoon was a ploy to redirect your attention.”

“Really? What’s in the sack?”

“I brought some cushions from home for the benches. The Major said we could use them prior to moving into the new office. The ones installed there will have padding.”

“Good thinking. The occasional involuntary lady visitor will appreciate our thoughtfulness... Deal me two.”

“Will you miss me when we’re away at college?”

“Yes, and I’m not the only one, and not just the fellows. Liz will have to make do without her pal for a better part of a year.”

“With Ella gone, too, she’ll be spending most of her time over here. That will be good for her; believe me, she’s more than ready.”

“I’ll have her working with Sergeant Bate’s station patrol. Since sending you out disguised as a passenger improved their effectiveness, I’ll do the same with Liz.”

“That’s what she needs.”

“What do you have?”

“Nothing, sir. I was trying for a straight flush. What about you?”

“Three of a kind – jacks – and a pair of nines: one for me. Let’s have some more fancy shuffling.”

“Alrighty, shuffle-cut-shuffle-double fans-right and left shuffle-together-cut-two handed shuffle, and you cut, there! Oh, something more! Ring on this finger, cover it with the deck like so, and *voila*, now it is on the next finger.” He chuckled and shook his head.

The match

I’m back, Imaginary Ladies! In early May, it was time to plan another game of hide-and-seek with the station officers. This time, the Major suggested that I bring Myrna along. We could disguise ourselves as passengers, move about separately, and if at least one of us made her way to the office through the employee passageways, it would make the match even. That sounded like a difficult challenge, but it might make for a colorful start to our summer.

In passing, Myrna suggested that we dress as men for the match. For ladies who are tall and deep-voiced like us, along with proper attention given to costume and makeup, the metamorphosis works. She thought we could look convincingly manly. For hiding in plain view, I thought it was an excellent idea. Frank and Louis were stopping by for dinner, so we intended to draw them into our plans. [The Levesque household is usually lively when we are there, but the level of silliness rises substantially when Frank and Louis are mixed in. Granddaddy James enjoys having the boys around, and so do we. This time, the inseparable brothers were helping us refine various details in preparation for our upcoming match. In a switch, our adventures provide more fuel for their minds than anything they dream up.]

My purchases from Gilford’s department store mystified Mrs. Keane. Why did I buy work clothes for a tall skinny fellow? I told her they were for me. “Stop lying, girl! Who is he?” After Frank and Louis subjected them to their “processes” in the backyard she was convinced the three of us were not right in the head. “What are you doing? You ruined those new clothes!” I told her we wanted to make them looked worked in. “You three don’t understand anything about real work! You buy the clothes new and then work in them until they look like that. Myrna knows all about it! Nobody ruins her clothes faster than that girl!” That’s right. My astute sister brought us little jars of dirty oil and grease from the locomotive shop to use in the mix. We need some authenticity.

The match begins at 11:30 on the morning of the last Saturday of the month, presumably the last slow day before business picked up for the summer. Our task is getting past the officers and presenting ourselves to the supervisor in the station police office. Starting at noon, any officer on

duty anywhere in the terminal can take us into custody by merely saying "Stop, I see you!" That makes the match more difficult. Like our fictional heroines Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight, we decided to split up and meet at the finish line. *[This gives us a better chance to score a tied match. Myrna plans to enter the station through the main entrance; I intend to ascend the steps from the lower yards to the open-air freight tram, and then use the concourse passageway to go directly to the office. So bold! How? Thanks to Frank, Louis, Gilford's, and sundry merchants, we were men!]*

Myrna's disguise was a complex undertaking. Starting with furniture quilts and matting, we worked together to construct a curious undergarment that obliterated her graceful form completely. When covered by a shirt, vest, and frockcoat, her torso resembled that of a stocky gentleman of middle age with a slight paunch. Following along that line, we created puffy undersleeves to match, and with the trousers, we added an inner layer. The rest of her suit was easy: shoes, stockings, suspenders, tie and pin, pocket watch, fob, handkerchief, gloves, cane, and hat. We found a wig for her but getting her hair beneath it was a problem. The same for me. Tackling that had to wait until Saturday.

Wearing slightly oversized brown dungarees and a heavy collarless cotton shirt, I'll assume the guise of a young laborer from the lower yards. My under-wrappings are not elaborate, and fortunately, much cooler. I have a cap and leather work gloves. Frank and Louis toiled diligently to give my new clothes the arduous work patina, along with some grease and oil stains. After several vigorous washings and a brutal drying in the sun on a piece of sheet iron, my costume is ready.

Between noon and half-past two on Saturday, we set to work on the final steps of our transformation. So that Myrna's hair might fit under the wig, I removed six inches of its length, cutting it even with her shoulders. Having spent an inordinate amount of time out-of-doors, her complexion resembled that of many men. I needed only to add a professional theatrical mustache. After cutting my hair boyish, about two inches below my ears, I combed in some of the greasy concoction gentlemen use to plaster down their hair. With some mussing, it looked appropriately disheveled.

When Mrs. Keane saw us coming down the stairs she screamed. After Myrna grinned, her face turned beet red. The conniption that followed was impressive! I told her that we were performing roles in a little production. As usual, we made a quick exit before she started asking more questions.

Myrna walked through the main entrance, passing by the watchman at the door and Sergeant Bates. Her arrival was well timed. It was the moment when the southbound morning express trains were discharging their passengers, and others were boarding the northbound afternoon expresses. The crowded lobby offered a blind to step into the main passageway on the west side of the building and take the employee hallway directly to the Station Police Office. Until Myrna took off her hat and wig, Major Durant initially thought that the distinguished gentleman lost his way. He erupted into a fit of laughter.

Unfortunately, the warehouse foreman conscripted me into assisting a crew of men unloading freight from boxcars. That a "scrawny beanpole kid" could work so vigorously surprised him. "What's your name, son?" I replied, "Ladd E. Speight, sir!" Once done, he told me to go back to my crew. The delay only cost me forty minutes, but I didn't expect Myrna to complete her task so quickly. Halfway up the steps to the concourse:

"Stop, I see you!" I froze, turned around, smiled, and raised my hands.

“Sergeant Quince!” He looked surprised. “I didn’t know you worked weekends. So nice to see you.”

“Likewise, Miss Levesque. I’m here today just for the match. Impressive disguise: you sure fooled me!”

“Then what gave me away?”

“Nothing. Your sister showed up some time ago dressed as a dapper middle-aged gentleman. We figured your disguise was similar. See that slender boy-faced squire up there looking over the railing? I thought he might be you.”

“Well, here I am!” Major Durant called the match even but admitted that our deception was well-conceived. [That was fun!]

My conversation with Liz (with Ella’s unwelcomed sardonic commentary)

Since the beginning of the sultry season, Liz resumed her weekday visits to my basement workshop for her after work nap in the cool before joining her daddy for dinner. Our household tyrant Mrs. Keane closes shop at seven so we must be seated at the table at six. Liz foregoes the honor of joining us because her ladyship demands she dress for dinner. Fortunately, my cousin values an hour of cool relaxation on the cot more than two dinners in the same evening. [*She’s not missing anything.*] On weekends, Liz is inclined to stay longer if I bring down a pitcher of iced tea. Upon arriving, she immediately sheds her uniform jacket, blouse, and skirt. [*Is that all?*] I find it amusing that she readily abandons her celebrated vernier of perfection for college dormitory informality. [*It would be more amusing if we hid her clothes.*] Even Ella and I have boots and loose drab attire for tinkering and sundry antics. Mrs. Keane calls them our “feeding the hogs dresses.” [*We need a few swine to round out the menagerie.*] Regardless, it’s reassuring that our original rough-and-tumble Liz is still her true self. On this occasion, she had some office chatter for me.

Major Durant told Mr. Hennessy that you’re progressing rapidly with your training. By next summer, he anticipates that you could be the company’s first woman station police officer.”

“Only provisionally. I must attend college. Ella said your daddy enrolled us in your exclusive greenhouse for future society ladies. What’s it like?”

“Frigid! The captives call it “*Château de Glace*, the cold storage locker for young ladies.” [*Plant cabbage instead.*] As for the curriculum, the girls study the classics, history, philosophy, math, general science, drawing, music, acting, gymnasium, and French.”

“Not more French!” [*Cela semble excitant.*] [Stop it!]

“We studied French for the purpose of impressing English speakers rather than scholarship. Knowing the appropriate rejoinders is essential to adding nothing to the conversation with sophistication [*Rien ici*], like quoting Shakespeare [*Thou whoreson zed!*]. A liberal education will provide you with enough knowledge to recognize when you are treading on thin ice.” [*Ha-ha-ha!*] [Wait your turn!] Sign up for acting.”

“Miss Osborne said I was a natural comic!”

“Your nature is comic. To be a true actress you must be able to perform parts convincingly that are contrary to your nature. You learn how to do this by studying acting. When you’re ready, audition for any role in every production.”

“Did you do that?”

“Absolutely! The practical aspect of attending *Château de Glace* was acquiring the skill to convince the public that I am the opposite of my natural self. Now, I can slip into character effortlessly. As with all roles, you must suppress your aversion to emotional dissonance and physical discomfort. I saw your photograph.

“No fare! Ella said she wouldn’t show it around!”

“She didn’t. It’s in your officer training file.”

“Goodness! I told her to fix my hair. Instead, she cut it too short, and then took my glasses.”

“With your hair piled atop your head in the old style and those spectacles you look like a schoolmarm; wear your hair this length and lose the specs, *voila*, your true beauty shines forth.” [*I rarely agree with Liz but she’s right.*]

“I can’t see more than twenty feet in front of me without glasses so foregoing them is impractical; as for my hair, this way is a reluctant final compromise. My unruly tresses are a curse: I cannot continue looking like a wild girl two hours after arriving at work. The best I can do is tie it back in a ponytail. Even then, pinning it up is the only way my mane will fit under the hat.” [*Liz’s comments are general. Remember our discussion about not wanting to draw attention to ourselves. Your schoolmarm look is perfect.*]

“So, Miss Myrna knows about playing an unpalatable role!”

“Who chose these new uniforms?”

“Mr. Hennessy.”

“They look marvelous, but the material is not suitable for our summers. How often do you wear the jacket?”

“Coming to work, walking between offices, and leaving work. I can’t wait to take it off.”

“I know. Not just the jacket but the entire uniform! Do you lounge about at home in your undergarments?”

“I dress modestly when settling in since my daddy frequently receives associates after business hours. He prefers having dinner at the Southside Hotel. That means that I must dress in an evening gown.”

“How is the food there?”

“The daily specials at the Railroad Hotel Dining Hall are much better. The only reason why we go there is gladhanding with the muckety-mucks. They gather there because it’s a social ritual. It doesn’t need substance. As for my daddy, I have yet to understand why playing to the gentry of this place seems so important to him. Your grandfather doesn’t do it!”

“What else would you expect? He grew up here.”

“Speaking of roles, what do you think of being selected to be the first woman station officer?”

“You know me, ha-ha-ha, I’m not picky!”

“I know that laugh. That’s a device you use to diminish the seriousness of just about every topic.”

“Alrighty, I’m satisfied with being a draftswoman in the Engineering Department and checking calculations for Mr. Skinner. Even being the station officers’ volunteer mock miscreant is dandy, more so since the bench has cushions. I’m ready for anything! It is too early for me to settle on one thing till I drop. However, I don’t want to train for a job that nobody will let me perform, save managing files. It has nothing to do with us being women and everything about preserving the Levesque heirs’ controlling interest in the company. The wills your daddy had us sign ensures its safety excluding the unlikelihood of all of us dying at once. In that case, it wouldn’t matter. Despite Mr. Hennessy’s unfounded concerns for our possible kidnapping, he entertains the desire to see us following through with our professional inclinations rather than wasting our talents on clerical work. That you will be supervising the women station officers is a step forward.

Allow me to interject. Major Durant politicked to allow us to pursue the principal vocations in any of our company’s departments with no special exclusions from normal duties, providing that our assignments are at Unity Terminal. Mr. Hennessy agreed. This means Myrna can remain a

station officer after she is certified, and her routine will match those of her colleagues. Mr. Buchanan didn't object. However, he wants Myrna to continue with her summer apprenticeships with periodic assignments in other departments until she graduates from college. Furthermore, he insists that she remain an employee of the Legal Department with Mr. Hennessy being her principal supervisor, having the authority to "schedule, postpone, modify, or discontinue said assignments if the need arises." All the gentlemen agreed that Myrna should refrain from doing anything "extraordinary" when avoidable.

Granddaddy James discovered a simple cure for Mrs. Keane's tasteless recipe for boiled beef: salt, black pepper, and chopped onions sautéed in butter. He calls this condiment "Beef restorer and general lubricant."

Uncle Roscoe threw me for a loop this morning. [Surprise!] In two weeks, we must prepare to leave for college. That means our summer apprenticeships will be cut short. [Drats!]

CHAPTER THREE

SPECIAL INQUIRIES, 1914

Mr. McNair is training me as a draftswoman – my “smart boys” in the Engineering Department think I am coming along nicely – but anything pertaining to building or mechanical contraptions is for me besides running, climbing, swimming, tinkering, calculating, and exploring. I also enjoy playacting, sleight-of-hand, and penning silly stories. Ella is a different sort.

My expertise is risk-taking, along with subterfuge, distraction, and naughtiness. Uncle Roscoe recognized the utility of my dubious talents early, conscripting me into his regiment of railroad detectives. Only last year, I completed my training. My periodic assignments include assisting Liz Buchanan at corporate headquarters and working in the office of station police. In the latter, I maintain records, attend to any woman that the officers arrest, and surveil the station for illicit activity. Sometimes, I am the officers’ volunteer mock miscreant, evading them for hours while moving about in the terminal.

Both Ella and Liz are headstrong, mercurial, competitive, and mischievous. Their bottled-up rough tomboy natures occasionally leak out, but in unique ways, more so for Liz since she must act the part of a perfect college educated society lady to maintain Mr. Hennessy’s favor. Once relieved of these trappings, that girl exercises vigorously, pushing herself to achieve ever greater feats of endurance and strength. By contrast, Ella is acrobatic, and has ambitions to perform on stage. Her specialty is illusion, which dovetails with my sleight-of-hand and juggling. Just think, if the railroad doesn’t want us, we three could join the circus – ha-ha-ha!

Lost and Found

Mr. Hennessy sent word to the Engineering Department that he must speak with me immediately. Uh-huh, I’m in trouble. Upon entering his office, Liz gave me a dainty lace-trimmed handkerchief on which she embroidered my initials in green thread. Good! I just might need it.

“My word, Myrna. You look splendid in your new uniform. What’s in your skirt pockets?”

“Oh, various things.” He placed a wooden box at the edge of his desk. “Right, sir, in the box. Let’s see... housekeys, change purse, pocketknife, a pack of playing cards – Want to see something amazing? No? – three pretty rocks, gum eraser, sketch pad, pencil box, there! Other pocket? Company papers, assorted passes – Oh, this one expired – hairbrush – I need that – hair ribbons – These, too! – what’s this? ‘And Parson Bungee had Mrs. Jeeters recline on the...’ oh my – This must be the new one – Right, sir, in the box. Silly me! In the trash? How about let me show it to Liz first? No? Alrighty, there! Jacket pockets? Well, I haven’t gotten around to using them. Mr. McNair lets us work in shirt sleeves since it’s hot.”

“Don’t leave his department without putting on your jacket and hat. Where are your gloves?”

“Right here, sir, in my... jacket pocket. Oops! Oh, Liz made this handkerchief. See my initials – M-E-L.”

“Take a seat. We’ll sort through your ‘various things’ later.” He placed a small wrought-iron lockbox on his desk. Uh-oh, more mysteries from the archives.

“Here is you’re first assignment. The Chief Engineer recovered this artifact from a work site near the company workshops during the 1840s. Except for something loose rolling around inside, it seems empty.” 1840s! “Thinking it was something left behind by the Haynes family, he contacted their attorney. Eventually, a Haynes heir responded. He knew nothing about an empty wrought

iron lockbox but suspected it was made by a blacksmith. Since there was nothing inside, he would retrieve it on passing through. The box was placed in storage at the company's business office in town, then moved to storage at corporate headquarters in 1887, and now occupies too much space on my desk. Please take it to Mr. Garrington to see whether he can make a key for it, identify when it was made and whether it was manufactured in a foundry or the work of a local craftsman, and lastly, find out what is rattling inside. If this turns out to be an important find, we can put it on display in the station alongside Mr. McNair's architectural models. Wrap it up in this newspaper. You don't want to get dirt on your uniform. Off you go!" The ornate lockbox weighed about twenty pounds.

Fitted with a Bramah lock on the lid, Mr. Garrington identified the lockbox as a safe manufactured sometimes during the 1790s at earliest. The ornate design on the lid and sides appeared to be rolled on a machine when the metal was hot. Our first task was lubricating the hinges. If we failed to open the lock, drilling out the hinge pins was our next choice. While probing the keyhole, Mr. Garrington found the sliders inside the lock barrel were immovable. We agreed that drilling out the hinge pins would cause the least damage to this artifact. He considered restoring the Bramah lock to working condition a worthy objective. After removing the pins, it took a considerable amount of time gingerly sliding it free from the locking bolt. Upon opening the box, we discovered what was rattling: a large brass key with a note tied around the stem. This was the key to the Haynes family tomb, an above ground stone structure removed after the railroad acquired the land. Also, in the box there was something remarkable. It was the diary of Joseph Haynes, one of the region's original landholders. He lived from 1702 until 1763. His wife was Hester Smallwood Haynes, a distant ancestor of our sheriff. I thought it was best to leave the restoration of the lockbox to Mr. Garrington while I took the diary and key to the company archives for photographing and preservation. I was anxious to start transcribing the text. In the first few pages there was a description and sketch of the house he was building. The McNair boys were on the mark about its layout and size. The Haynes plantation house on the Northeast River was its twin minus the later additions. Wonderful! I spoke by telephone with our expert on local history Dr. Delmer Willis. He was delighted to learn that we had in our possession the earliest first-hand account of life in Port Unity. I did not tell him that the company kept the lockbox in storage for seven decades.

The diary of Joseph Haynes describes the site of his plantation in detail. In his 1835 report, our company's first chief engineer and superintendent found its vast expanse the same: a "sandy scrubland atop a bluff." It was an ideal location for many enterprises save agriculture. Setting to rest further speculation about the natural landscape of yesteryear, the railroad and urban growth obliterated it thoroughly. What might remain is a few sprouts of a native plant growing wild in an untended lot. Even the forestland is neither old nor diverse. Port Unity of the colonial era was a hodgepodge of serviceable structures scattered over a grid of nine blocks fronting the river, all bisected by shallow streams. A town of merchants, tradesmen, artisans, and laborers, it had yet to attract enough of the educated sort to govern itself. Nevertheless, the royal governor and his patrons provided the buildings for it. The market house, county courthouse, and town hall were oddly situated in intersections on Commerce Street, an arrangement soon abandoned after fire destroyed these original landmarks.

During Joseph Haynes lifetime, Port Unity didn't have a newspaper. Official notices were posted in public places. The market house bell rang out the hour, and a meager band of townsmen

patrolled the sandy streets from dusk to dawn. More often than not they shared a bottle while performing their rounds, eventually encamping in the churchyard at Commerce and Third. Mr. Haynes noted that the town employed two constables, but their duties were limited to attending to the business of upholding the law. These officials still needed help from the citizens to apprehend wrongdoers. This inefficient ritual continued until the early 1840s, and the “committees of public safety” revived the tradition. By the 1850s, Port Unity had an adequate company of constables to police the town without the assistance of amateurs.

The diary includes vivid descriptions of several dwellings in town. One had a hearth decorated with decorative tile. The most common width of a house was sixteen feet. Regrettably, he was not specific about locations. I could continue with this summary but truly little of the text is anchored in the familiar. There are two houses in Port Unity from this period: one built in 1739 and the other in 1762. The entire colonial town in which they were built was demolished and rebuilt several times over before anybody bothered to make a drawing of any building. Of the people Mr. Haynes mentioned in his diary, only a few remained after the town’s infancy. The muckety-mucks had yet to put down stakes. By contrast, more of the newcomers first homes still stand clustered together in the Southside near the river, all built in the popular urban style of the early republic between 1790 and 1820. Our ancestor Jacques Levesque knew this incarnation of Port Unity. Unfortunately, his house was destroyed during the Great Fire of 1843. I use Dr. Willis’ term “Lost History” to describe the absence of documents associated with long-gone buildings. I think “Lost Geographies” is an appropriate term for the periodic near obliteration of a whole town with all its familiar paths and places perishing with the generation who knew them. I think this assignment is complete (for now).

Another “special inquiry”

A week after we opened the lockbox, Mr. Hennessy called me into his office. Liz told me the boss was assigning me to his latest “special inquiry,” meaning something he dredged up from the company archives.

“Take a seat, Myrna.”

“Your message said you wanted to speak with me immediately.”

“Yes. In 1904, one man went missing from a five-member track crew working inside the great arc near Unity Bluff Station. Four years later, two members of the crew vanished near the same location. The three were never seen again. These unusual occurrences took place before I accepted this position. At present, Ella is assisting me with the ‘special inquiry’ into these unsolved cases. When you have nothing better to do, think about how such a thing could happen given the unique characteristics of the location. Elizabeth has copies of the case files. Mr. McNair has the survey maps and the like for the great arc. Cogitate on them with that eccentric analytical mind of yours. You’re apt to see something that we missed.” What is he talking about? He removed a folder from his desk drawer. “Today, I received this report and time sheet from Captain Johnston.” Oops! This is it. “He is pleased with your work; therefore, I am approving his request to have you assist him with performing his vignettes for the officers’ report writing training and examinations. Anticipating the company will hire women station officers in the near future, I am recording your two and a half hours as procedural training. You have ninety-seven and a half hours remaining in this category.” Hurrah! “As you know, he has these sessions when business is slow. (There went my Saturdays.) Regardless, you’ll be paid for the additional hours.”

“Wonderful, sir!”

“As the Major told the *Messenger* reporter, we anticipate hiring the first three in the fall of 1916. I expect you will be certified long before then, the company’s first.” I want to be first; if not that, the best! “However, you’ll still be in college. Add it to your list of achievements. I imagine you’ll want to pursue an additional degree in Engineering like the McNair boys. Regardless, Superintendent Levesque wants you to gain experience by working in all the railroad’s principal departments. Liz and Ella are settled into their niches but that might change as new opportunities present themselves. To be modern, one must remain agile.” How about driving automobiles?

“You know me, sir – ha-ha-ha – Miss Something-or-other and Whatnot: I do a little bit of everything.”

“Excellent! Now, Engineering Department; go.” That was it!

Ella’s odd assignment

Prior to the election of Sheriff Smallwood and his reformers, unexplained disappearances were commonplace in the working-class neighborhoods of the railroad district, starting with the rumored abduction of the charismatic politician Pete Bresnahan in 1890. Thereafter, two phantasmic legends emerged from the incident: in the railroad district, the vengeful spirit of Demon Pete is responsible for any unexplained occurrences, particularly disappearances. For the middle-class audiences, journalist turn novelist Nester Horne penned a romance entitled *The Ghost of Buzzard Creek*. It is widely accepted that the author, having his true account of the story suppressed by a prominent citizen, concealed clues behind the lines of his text. Mr. Hennessy, ever thorough when assigning his *protégées* busywork, wants Ella to prepare a report of the legendary and real Pete Bresnahan, including Demon Pete. “All paths lead somewhere.” Uh-huh, sometimes back to where you started. Here are her notes.

Sometimes, absurdity comes to the fore to stimulate some serious investigation. Every year on summer evenings since the turn of the century passengers occasionally report having seen a glowing orb two miles southwest of Haynes Town Station near the trestle over Buzzard Creek. Some of the residents of Northeast Township brave the mosquitoes and yellow flies to venture through the swampland to watch for it. Local lore has it that the light is the ghost of Pete Bresnahan pointing the way to his unmarked grave. Repeatedly, the company sent out engineers to observe the phenomenon and they come to the same conclusion: steel rails transmit an electrical charge over distance, and it excites pockets of the methane gas accumulating in the swamps from decaying vegetation. There are many such “ghost lights” observed on railroads throughout the country, some having inspired storytellers to concoct enthralling fictions. Nevertheless, light, magnetism, and electricity link intimately to matter, so all phantasmic explanations belong to the craft of popular literature. If you leave the door open for restless spirits meddling with the natural order then you cannot turn away leprechauns, witches, snallygasters, and the bogie man. If anybody save Mrs. Keane considered the implications of sharing our existence with a menagerie of unruly castoffs from the Realm of Anything Goes, they will quickly realize that our certainty about the behavior of the natural world falls.

Tommyrot aside, the disappearance of Pete Bresnahan is a mystery which has occupied the imagination of many – often too much – since the mid-1890s. The self-described historian Nester Horne is responsible for attaching the “Ghost Light” to the narrative though he exaggerated many details and manufactured a romantic framework for the tale. Bresnahan, the first populist political boss was a ladies’ man who carried on with numerous women, including those who were married. One evening, an enraged husband and his friends took the rascal away on the back of a buckboard tied hand and foot. An old man reported seeing the party leave town on the River Road, also called

then the Haynes Town Road, now the northern extent of County Highway. Nothing appeared in the Messenger about the incident, but rumors circulated that the men murdered Pete and threw his body in the swamp. Horne weaved the "Ghost Light" in to add spectral spice. The residents of the railroad district have a different myth. When somebody disappears – or perceived as going missing – the malevolent spirit of "Demon Pete" took them. Young ladies get a heaping dose of the myth starting from girlhood. Pete likes the ladies! The fiend is apt to take victims when they venture out alone after dark, "spiriting" them away to an underground lair. His motivation is retribution: the working-class men he represented did not come to his rescue. They didn't even report his abduction! Even his staunchest followers stood by and let it happen. Legends pertaining to the demise of Pete Bresnahan are not a matter for the company, but Uncle Roscoe is concerned the unexplained vanishings of several railroad men over the years attributed to Demon Pete is worthy of a cursory inquiry. He specifically used the term "inquiry" since there was insufficient evidence to justify an investigation.

The three reported instances occurred prior to 1909, all reported by a foreman in the upper yards, and Major Durant filed a report with Sheriff Browning after conducting a thorough search of company property. It is doubtful whether the former sheriff devoted any effort to the cases. The Major and I commenced our inquiry by interviewing Miss Agnes Tedder, a longtime employee of the company who works in the office at Unity Bluff Station. It is a diminutive waystop near the east abutment of the railroad bridge at the confluence of the Northeast and Southwest rivers. The great five-mile arc leading to the beginning of the northern division of the line and the tracks of the Unity Terminal's upper yards begin in the freight yard of this station. With the exception of the Houghton Metalworks contained within the arc, the land was the former site of Paradise Plantation, a property once owned by the reclusive Dr. Andre Hecke. The company purchased the entire tract in 1841. Miss Tedder, who spent her entire thirty-one years living in her parents' cottage on the bluff recalled hearing several stories about the plantation from her grandfather. Dr. Hecke, an emigrant from Nassau, purchased the land in 1811 from Claudius Murray, the absentee owner. The physician cultivated medicinal plants from which he derived extracts. His only known friend in Port Unity was Dr. Michael Andrews, a founding member of the state medical society and first editor of their journal. At age seventy, Dr. Hecke sold his holdings to the company and removed to Charleston. While this morsel of history is fascinating we were anxious to hear about Demon Pete. Miss Tedder told us that her late father came across unmarked graves while hunting on the northern perimeter of the plantation, abandoned to nature for sixty years. She was willing to lead us to the site. After asking Sheriff Smallwood and Coroner Cordell to join us, we trekked through the scrub and brambles from the outer edge of the arc until we reached the ruins of the plantation house. The coroner found six sunken patches of earth in a row – indicative of graves. In close proximity were fragments of tombstones. It turned out to be the Murray family burying ground, one hundred and fifty years older than what we were expecting. Dr. Cordell is preparing the paperwork to have the remains removed to County Cemeteries after he makes his examination. Though our inquiry failed to reveal anything concerning the railroad men who went missing, Uncle Roscoe told Mr. McNair about our find. He intends to send Myrna, Frank, and Louis out to the ruins of the Murray-Hecke House to make drawings and take photographs. It dates from the same period as the long-gone Haynes House which served as the terminal's first station.

No fair! Ella just created more work for me! On the other hand, it might all fit together. The Murray and Haynes families were neighbors.

Early Port Unity Depot

Ladies, remember what I was working on last summer? No? How could you? Mrs. Keane took our journals – ha-ha-ha! Alrighty, Mr. McNair had me researching piles of drawings and documents from the archives in an attempt to discover what the company built at Unity Terminal before the chief engineer's records went up in flames. I'm still at it! Where should I begin afresh? Let's start with something substantial: land.

Today, I learned that there are deposits of limestone within the terminal and some of our oldest brick walls have mortar made from it. One large chunk of the stone found in the inclined plane contains fragments of shells. At some point in the distant past, the land was under the ocean. Somebody anxious to study engineering should know about the nature of the soil where they anticipate building. Mr. McNair gave me a bulletin from the state geologist to read about the different clays used in brickmaking. The river deposited the clay used in locally made brick. It began as stone far inland, gradually eroded by weathering and stream flow until the clay particles settled out when the water could no longer carry them. The early builders in the region used local clay to make brick and the limestone to make mortar. They also used ballast stones dumped from the ships. Good enough! In the afternoon, Frank and Louis took me for a drive. First off, we went to the Office of the Register of Deeds in the basement of the courthouse. The entrance is below the front steps. I wanted to take a peek at the magnificent hall on the first floor, but the boys said we didn't have time. They had plenty of adventures in store – hurrah! Hastily, they showed me how to use the indices to find a deed, by grantor or by grantee. We found the original deed for the Haynes land the railroad purchased in 1834. It mentioned the stream cutting through the bluff and limestone outcrops in the gully. The deed referenced a survey made by Major Romulus Simmel. We found it, too!

In 1818, Joshua Haynes hired Simmel to resurvey his three-hundred-acre unproductive plantation into town blocks, 330 feet by 330 feet separated by a grid of roads sixty-six feet wide, most divided into five lots. The plan attenuated some blocks to accommodate existing county roads. Mr. Haynes intended to sell off these parcels individually over time; and by the end of the last century, his heirs bargained away the last of them. The railroad purchased six blocks between the bluff overlooking the river and the ancient bridge on the county road, including the old family house on the bluff and its outbuildings; and a ninety-nine-foot right-of-way extending northeasterly through the entire Haynes property centered upon the gulley. The chief engineer at the time favored this location because there was a natural decline of twenty degrees over three thousand feet to the bluff; and by excavating the stream bed and putting down track, the company might have an inclined plane to bring a train to the river's edge. The latter happen in 1843; but in 1834, the depot existed on paper. We took a ride to Northeast Township on the bumpy dirt road called County Highway. When it's finished, the commissioners might dream up a better name for it. Our destination was the site of the long-abandoned other Haynes Plantation in search of evidence of early buildings. No luck. The drive to the house reverted to a patch of dense scrub and pines. A maze of meandering sandy roads cut through it to a landing. It was getting late, so we decided to return to corporate headquarters.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the environs north of the terminal from Simmel's Boundary Street continuing to Unity Bluff, it was once entirely the Murray Plantation (1734-1811), the Andre Hecke Paradise Estate (1811-1840) and the railroad bought the land in 1841, which at the time was mostly forest. In 1848, Houghton Ironworks purchased a cleared tract of twenty acres. It is now within the great five-mile arc connecting the railroad bridge to Unity Terminal and the main trunk (1868-69). Houghton Metal Works & Scrap remains on its original parcel located inside the arc, accessible by a road intersecting River Street. It also has a spur leading to Unity Bluff

Station freight yard. The ruins of the Murray-Hecke house and Murray family burying ground are located inside a young forest extending from Unity Bluff Station to the confluence of the Northeast and Southwest rivers. Let's see what Ella is up to.

Now, Uncle Roscoe wants to know more about Pete Bresnahan, so he tasked me with the research. I discovered several fascinating stories on my pathway to nowhere. The descendants of the first families in Port Unity (the muckety-mucks) speak of notable citizens in the early town with reverence even though their contributions were not extraordinary. Amongst the forgettable personalities is Victor Benoit, a successful merchant who was a town alderman, served on a church vestry, and lent his support to various local improvement projects. In many respects, he differs little from the generations of successful minor businessmen who followed him. His claim to local notoriety is the house he left behind. In 1820, the elderly Mr. Benoit purchased an entire town block in Joshua Haynes' fatuous continuation of Port Unity. He selected a level well-drained spot on a hill near the county road (now Fourth Street) with the front of the lot facing a vast grassy field of gently decreasing elevation. He hired a respected builder to construct his grand Federal Style dwelling, passing away in 1829 without realizing his error. Romulus Simmel's plan projected a grid of streets upon the undulating topography of Haynes Plantation, with all those running west-to-east new to the town plan. A proposed street named "Overview" encroached upon railroad property and never became part of the public way. Briefly, his new house was visible from Boundary Street (now Mulberry). The terminal soon eclipsed it. When the county continued the south-to-north streets of Port Unity in the Northside, the grand entrance of the Benoit House faced the high plank fence of the passenger yard and the rear fronted Haynes Street between Third and Fourth. A later owner of the house named Horace McElhenny had an elaborate Italianate addition added to the Haynes Street side to create a new entrance – fascinating history, but the Bresnahan association with the house comes decades later.

In 1877, the Benoit-McElhenny House became the headquarters of the Popular Coalition, a political club whose mission was to garner votes for a slate of candidates of varying party affiliations supporting policies favorable to the interests of small farmers and the working class. While similar organizations existed throughout the country during this period, the primary objective of the local "populists" was dislodging the ineffective career politicians. In their endeavors the coalition garnered some support from "The Family," descendants of the original land barons of the region. Additionally, the Houghton Metalworks and many Port Unity merchants provided financial backing for the organization. By 1879, a gifted orator named Pete Bresnahan relentlessly stumped for the candidates in every venue imaginable throughout the county, always accompanied by his rabbleroising colleague Joe Griggs. There is no consensus amongst regional chroniclers as to the origin of the duo, but they agree that Bresnahan was the most eloquent. Despite the prevailing legends, Mr. Bresnahan was popular but not a ladies' man. The rise of the Bresnahan-Griggs machine began after the Great Fire destroyed the North Docks along with a great portion of the terminal. During the decade which followed, the Popular Coalition bankrolled numerous candidates, gradually replacing the ossified Board of County Commissioners by the late 1880s. Bresnahan's disappearance occurred a few years before the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing economic downturn. Crop prices fell, hurting farmers throughout the country. The situation proved to be a boon for the populists. It was during this time Boss Joe Griggs packed county government with his favorites. The worst of the lot was the corrupt Sheriff Dick Browning. During the Election of 1912, The Family in conjunction with dissatisfied prominent citizens throughout the county offered a slate of reform candidates as opposition to the Griggs machine, foremost among them attorney and former state senator Herbert W. Smallwood. Mr. Levesque threw his support behind

the reformers. The Popular Coalition sustained heavy losses but still maintained a foothold in county government due to continued support in rural communities. The owners of shanties in the railroad district enjoy protection from the enforcers of modern standards because the county blocks all annexation efforts by the City of Port Unity – the opposite of Joshua Haynes' intention.

The Benoit-McElhenny House is still the headquarters of the Popular Coalition, and Orrin Blackwell is its chairman. Boss Joe Griggs is still the president of the organization and the “kingmaker,” but he rarely appears in public, whiling away his later years in his “villa” on the sound. The Messenger made no mention of Pete Bresnahan's disappearance nor was there a report filed with then-sheriff Sam Dupree. Official documents supporting any of the tales concerning his nocturnal abduction by the friends of a vengeful husband do not exist. Even the name of the old man who claimed to have witnessed the crime is unnamed in Nester Horne's spurious narratives. For want of any evidence to the contrary, one can easily put forth the argument that Bresnahan skipped off.

Uncle Roscoe considered my work a valuable exercise. Yes, it was merely instructive! Pure fabrication endures in a state where official documentation is lacking, therefore, supporting or refuting prevailing beliefs is impossible... except, where rigid facts and physical laws contravene the claims. Myrna is struggling with her own variant of the historical conundrum: attempting to render representations of unremarkable things from the past environs of the terminal using fragmentary evidence. While Mr. McNair might benefit from unearthing the footings of a long-gone passenger station, even finding demolition debris validating her speculation, one can only learn so much from a shoeprint. Undocumented knowledge spoils! In most instances, the lost past doesn't trouble anybody until there is a present need to know it.

Good enough! It is awfully sensible to know the difference between what we don't know and what we can't know and why knowing this or that is worth knowing, because some things Mrs. Keane knows are best forgotten, and there might be some interesting facts strewn along the path that leads to nowhere – I know more about old houses in general because the particulars of the Haynes house are unknowable, so, general knowledge is useful for determining what the unknowable is not. Ladies, do you like surprises? Uh-huh, Mr. McNair likes the nice ones, too! He is of a different mind when it comes to unanticipated discoveries on his construction sites. The history of building in the terminal is interesting to him inasmuch as it helps the company avoid unnecessary delays in putting up *his* buildings. That's it! I find the same interesting because all the inconsequential and unprovable possibilities apply to something somewhere, sometimes.

Maintenance of the road

So, what *exactly* are the regular tasks of a track crew? Mr. Hennessy sent me to Roadmaster Eric Harland to receive instruction for a few days. Let's start with something easy to comprehend. Railroad companies must maintain their line over its entire extent continuously: fences mended, weeds cut, ballast tamped, ditches cleared, crossties replaced, rails and switches repaired, and so forth. Every five miles on the main corridors of our railroad is a section with its own section house, a workshop equipped with the necessary tools and materials for the regular tasks. The track crew responsible for maintaining the section includes five laborers, a watchman, a trackwalker, and a foreman. Trackwalkers inspect the section, identifying damage and hazards. They perform minor repairs which consume little time from their primary duties. Watchmen have the tools for more demanding tasks such as renewing a crosstie or clearing a culvert. The laborers perform the more extensive work. That railroads are out in the open subject to the actions of nature is one reason for constant maintenance. Train traffic is another destroyer.

Mr. Harland took me out to Haynes Town Station on the morning way train. This is Section Three, including the three miles before Haynes Town and the two miles leading to the Northeast River Bridge. The foreman took us for a ride along its entire length in the four-wheeled velocipede – a type of vehicle similar to a handcar except powered by a gasoline motor. I saw the trestle at Buzzard Creek where folks congregate in their rowboats to watch for the “ghost lights.” It’s a mosquito-infested stretch of stagnate swamp shaded by wide-kneed trees festooned with Spanish moss with a sluggish stream passing through. I couldn’t imagine any sight worth an after dark wait in this miasmic hole. Nevertheless, I received a fascinating introduction to trestle construction. We climbed down to examine the pilings and cross bracing. The deck this structure supports is constructed of massive timbers. At Buzzard Creek there are twin trestles, one for each of the double track. The tracks in the remainder of the section rest upon a wide embankment. A foot of ballast – crushed rock – separates the crossties from the embankment. On either side of its top is the slope of the berm. Rainwater trickles through the ballast and runs off these shoulders. The only vegetation allowed to grow on the embankment is grass, and the track crew keeps it from getting too tall. Grass prevents the embankment from eroding. Further along in the section, men were clearing the ditches. There are ditches on both sides of the tracks and drainage pipes and culverts beneath the double track. These ditches have sloped edges to inhibit erosion from rainwater and drain downwards their length to culverts. Where the railroad is situated inside an excavated hillside, there is an upper ditch to prevent rain from cutting ripples into the slope of the hill. Maintaining this aspect of the road is a year-round task, more so during the spring and summer months. Railroads are roads – roads of a special type – but their upkeep is similar to that of the best of ordinary roads.

The section house is located on the grounds of Haynes Town Station. When not in use, this is where the crew stores the velocipede. During our visit, I had a chance to examine some of the marvelous tools. The traveling rail bender, a simple device for making curves in rails, impressed me. A rail saw, and a rail drill – both hand operated – are equally clever contraptions: the former cuts the rail to the right length and the latter makes the bolt holes for the splice. Simple accoutrements include ballast picks, mauls, shovels, and spike pullers. Otherwise, the section house has the usual assortment of hammers, wrenches, saws, and so forth.

Upon returning to corporate headquarters, Mr. Harland recommended that I examine last year’s annual report and account records for his department. The number of men employed for the maintenance of the line is enormous! Hitherto, my studies centered upon locomotives, rolling stock and buildings. Granddaddy James told Mr. Buchanan to let me spend the coming fall and spring working in the offices responsible for managing the day-to-day running of the line including maintenance of the road and all equipment, not that I’ll ever end up managing anything. Ella must continue her work with Major Durant since he considers her well-suited to assist him (eventually); and Liz is excellent with the public (showoff).

Making history

Sometimes, maybe, most of the time, important folks cobble together a flattering story from mundane and sometimes absurd facts to create a compelling narrative that makes everybody feel good about the past. They call it heritage. Ella scribbled down this gem in our collaborative summer journal.

Uncle Roscoe decided that Miss Tedder’s erroneous revelations about the long-missing railroad men wasn’t entirely a waste of our efforts. In other words, he saw an opportunity to cobble the truth into favorable press for the company. Sheriff Smallwood and Coroner Cordell were happy

to play along. The Messenger reported how the dedicated employee Agnes Tedder led the gentlemen to the “neglected graves” of the Murray ancestors, “one of the first pioneering families to settle the untamed wilderness north of Port Unity” – untamed wilderness? The county commissioners proposed a special ceremony for the reinternment of the remains at County Cemeteries, and Sam Culver is commissioning “scrupulous reproductions” of the tombstones based upon the weathered fragments of the originals. The article also included scholarly commentary by Dr. Willis on the botanical research of Andre Hecke, mostly transmitted second hand by his friend Dr. Andrews. Even Mr. McNair contributed a paragraph about the building techniques employed by the early settlers of the county, noting little of the Murray-Hecke House dates from this period. Missing from this marvelous work of journalism is any mention of the missing men; and while Miss Tedder received credit for the find, the Messenger reporter never spoke with her.

“My daddy was fibbing about those graves he found while poaching on railroad land. Demon Pete had nothing to do with them – had me worked up all for nothing! – only regular dead folks laid out in a row – busted-up tombstones and all. That’s what I get for running my mouth! If those bones didn’t happen to be special, no doubt I’d be out of a job. That’s the truth!”

My next task was preparing elevations for the several early station buildings based upon my research and sundry artifacts found during recent construction projects so Frank and Louis can make scale models of the 1835 and 1856 terminals. They have already built two hypothetical landscapes for the buildings based upon the railroad’s deed for the Haynes land, a soil survey, the 1847 and 1853 maps of the town which include the terminal, and various clues they found in the annual reports. Why is this necessary? Mr. McNair wants the models placed on display behind glass in the station so the travelling public might see how the site changed over seventy-nine years. Uh-huh, he put me on the spot! I must make three problematic decisions: the size and appearance of the first station (the former Haynes plantation house on the bluff); determine whether the original locomotive shop was the same building in the 1850s lithograph and a pre-1880 photograph (or not); and find evidence supporting my conclusion that the 1856 station was two stories. Concerning the latter, I justified adding a second floor because the builders intended that the dining hall serve two hundred, and the ticket department figures in the annual reports during the mid-1850s showed that approximately that number of through passenger tickets were honored daily, both travelling north and south. In either case during that era, most passengers had no choice but stay overnight to take the steamboats or connecting line. Since the station was near the steamboat landing, formerly marsh, a wooden structure seemed best. Since I didn’t find any mention in the annual reports of funds spent on a new locomotive shop, it is a safe guess that the original stood until the company replaced it in 1885.

As for the Haynes plantation house, the older section of the nearby Murray-Hecke House seemed a safe choice: two stories, each having four large rooms and a hallway in the center, timber frame construction, two chimneys on both side ends of the house, a high front porch with steps (I imagine there was a drive), and a back porch in two levels facing the river. The foundations must have been ballast-stone like most houses in eighteen century Port Unity, the Murray-Hecke House is a good example even with its later additions. Every ship in port was dumping them on shore in piles so “never squander a good thing while you have it.” Also, these houses had a separate building for the kitchen in case it caught fire. The practice is commonplace in rural areas.

Alrighty, unless somebody discovers a firsthand description of the Haynes plantation house, nobody can verify or challenge my speculative rendering. That sounds like Ella’s definition of a

legend. For most folks who pause to gaze at our models, they wouldn't question the accuracy of the representation insomuch as most do not question anything presented to them as history. Good enough. (There's something awfully dangerous in that statement.)

The Great Arc

Having spent time with Mr. Harland watching the crew working in Section Three, it is difficult to imagine how a man could go missing in the great arc. The men move through the section in an organized fashion. While each has their task, the foreman keeps close watch. That is only the half of it. There is a set of physical obstacles that would hinder an abduction. Consider this: its five miles of double track put down in a half-circle cut into an undulating bluff. It does not become level with the surrounding land until it reaches the terrace halfway. Steep retaining walls extend most of the distance through the cut. There is one road leading to Unity Bluff Station, and the service access inside the arc ends in the Upper Yards. A wagon path from Houghton Metal Works connects to the curve at the end of River Street, but it ends at the spur leading to Unity Bluff freight yard. The stretch of track bypassing the terminal branches off from the arc, passes through the swamp beyond the mill creek, and ends at the main trunk. How does the villain get in and out of the arc without being seen?

He might enter and leave on foot, disguised as a laborer from the Upper Yards. The foreman's records show the men were working near the point where the nightly trains are switched to the spur connecting to the main line. There are no retaining walls at that place so an abductor can hide in waiting, concealed by the woods.

I searched through Granddaddy James' map cabinet for the 1867 topographic survey made when Mr. McNair's predecessor was preparing plans for the great arc. At the time, the company had cleared most of the trees from the Paradise tract for use in wood burning engines. With the introduction of coal burners, the land was left to return to nature. That means by 1904, more than three decades of growth produced an area-wide stand of young pines. Even so, it would not have obliterated the footpaths crisscrossing the tract. The most prominent ones on the survey branched off from the relic of the ancient Northwest Road. It led to a landing. Planters upriver used it to bring their crops to market. Dr. Willis mentions it in his book about early Port Unity. Ox carts were ferried across the river between the landings on their way to town. That continued until the introduction of steamboats and the railroad. We had some difficulty trudging through the undergrowth to get to the Murray-Hecke House. Its ruins are situated on the bluff overlooking the river. Hiking deep into the forest might be a risky undertaking. There might be snakes. No matter: we have wills! Ella had a better idea.

"Ask Agnes."

"Excellent! I'll telephone the boys."

Miss Tedder led Mr. Hennessy, Sheriff Smallwood, and Coroner Cordell directly to the site of the Murray burying ground, which is located near the forgotten Northeast Road. Having grown up in such an isolated spot, it seemed natural that she explored the woods with her daddy, and likely, still does on her own. We arrived at her cottage, map in hand. In short order, she traced out the shortest path between the landing and places where the men were reported missing. After that, all of us enjoyed Ella's forbidden buttery pound cake and coffee. Aside, we learned that despite Agnes' refusal to marry the aviator, the two are enjoying a lively correspondence. If he gives up flying, she'll change her mind.

Earlier in the week, Captain Johnston hit upon the idea of having me take on the disguise of a passenger, and patrol the station looking for baggage thieves, pickpockets, and unauthorized peddlers. I can also direct confused travelers and wandering children to the officer assigned to follow me at a distance. Spy some mischief, I must signal to him and walk away in order to preserve my anonymity. He imagines women station officers might be preferable for this type of work since they would be inconspicuous and more observant. That his officers rarely apprehend women criminals is evidence of the same in reverse.

Mr. Hennessy was satisfied with my work on the disappearing men case. Now, we have a plausible explanation of how a possible wrongdoer abducted them if future evidence points to such. In other words, just because it could happen doesn't mean it did. To further satiate his curiosity about certain longstanding tales about mysterious disappearances in the railroad district, Ella is researching the vanishing of political boss Pete Bresnahan, the fatuous Demon Pete Legend, and the unlawful actions of our former sheriff Dick Browning. I'm almost sure that these "inquiries" are merely exercises in investigative methods to hone our skills. Ella thinks she might end up being an outstanding historian before he'll assign her to an ongoing investigation.

Drats! Uncle Roscoe is still curious about the Demon Pete stories. While dismissing the spectral aspect of the rumors, he considers the possibility that a flesh and blood fiend prowling the railroad district is plausible. This week, he asked me to speak with Sheriff Smallwood by telephone when time permitted. Nothing was pressing about this matter. I decided to casually bring up the topic when Deputy Chester Wilkes came by the station police office to take a catch to jail. Tuesday was a particularly busy day for our officers, so he visited twice.

Mr. Wilkes said the only odd thing reported in the district during the last two years was the periodic nocturnal appearance of a Peerless touring car. Nobody in the county owns one. The dubious "neighborhood committees of safety" made the complaints but deputies on the regular patrols have not noticed anything out of the ordinary. As for fiends, these "committees" are always on the lookout for unsavory types venturing into their domain. If there was one afoot, he would find better hunting north of the terminal. This is where the hole-in-the-wall establishments spring up from time to time. Sheriff Smallwood cleared out most during his first year in office, but they come back. As for reports of missing persons, Mr. Wilkes redirected my attention to the number of "accidents" which occurred in the mostly uninhabited woodlands between Haynes Town and the Northeast River Bridge.

Since 1890, twelve people including John Culver and Fred Wheeler drowned in the swift current. While some careless folks from the neighborhood fell off the bridge while crossing over to Northeast Depot, at least six others had no reason to be in that section of the county. Furthermore, the sparsely inhabited woodlands between the railroad bridge and Culver's Lodge are rumored to be a haven for bootleggers. I found all of this interesting, but it had nothing to do with the disappearances in the railroad district... or it did. Of the six men who drowned in the river, all had residences in Northside neighborhoods on the edge of the district. Very strange. Mr. Wilkes thought the elusive "special constables" were responsible for their "accidents." Special constables? They took Florence Phelps but decided to leave her drugged unconscious on the road leading to her farm. Since Sheriff Smallwood took office, these imposters abducted three residents of the Northside effortlessly using counterfeit arrest warrants. Florence was the only person kidnapped by them who was fortunate enough to give her statement to Sheriff Smallwood. Mr. Wilkes suspects that they are professional criminals for hire whose specialty is masquerading as lawmen. He did not think they worked for the late Dick Browning. "Sheriff Browning and Judge Hastings had their

own method for making their problem folks disappear. The deputies rounded up the men on minor charges, and then took them directly to the county farm. There is no telling what really happened after they arrived. We have signed confessions, and Judge Hastings handed down the sentences, but there the paperwork ends. Browning never properly registered these poor fellows in the courthouse jail. His predecessor Sam Dupree started the practice to replenish the labor on the road gangs but kept the deed marginally legal. The judges sentenced tramps, vagrants, drunks, and other undesirables to brief periods of hard labor and the court extended their stay for the slightest transgressions. Nobody cared about these unfortunates. Before Dupree, the City of Port Unity used convict labor for street grading and putting down paving block."

Deputy Wilkes did not have time for further discourse on this ugly topic, but he suggested that Uncle Roscoe look beyond the unlikely possibility that a fiend is singlehandedly perpetrating flawless random abductions. We should examine the organized entities capable of accomplishing the crime efficiently, namely, any party deeply invested in the railroad district who stood to lose heavily on account of what somebody did or knew.

A fresh approach

I am not sure whether Mr. Hennessy is teaching us how to be sensible investigators, complete the unfinished work abandoned before he took charge, create busy work for us, or drive us insane. Liz disagrees. She thinks the disappearance of the railroad men, Pete Bresnahan, and the abduction of Florence Phelps are connected. She suspects Sheriff Dick Browning played a role in all three. His reports on the vanishing railroad men are missing or never existed. Fortunately, we have those prepared by Major Durant. Liz picked them up from her desk.

"Zack Colton, Billy Fields, and Gil McEvers were young single working-class men who Major Durant described in his final report as "dependable employees who perform their duties in a competent fashion." They were not exceptional and no one who knew them thought their character or inclinations deviated from the ordinary. They did, however, work under the same foreman, Richard Peterson, and maintained the same section. Like Sheriff Browning, Mr. Peterson is no longer with us. However, several members of his crew still work for the company. I suggested that we interview them.

The first useful clues

Roger Wright and Darius Newsome started out working as laborers on the track crew for Section One in the mid-1890s and by 1911 both had taken jobs in the Upper Yards machine shop. We met with them in Mr. Hennessy's spacious office, which is superbly appointed. (Ladies appreciate fine furniture.) I brought along a tin containing my freshly baked pecan cookies, Mr. Hennessy's favorite. Since Liz hand-delivered the Chief Inspector's invite (or summons), our guests arrived at the "administrative palace" in their Sunday best. Quite unexpected, one of the clerks from the Legal Department arrived with the coffee set. After introductions and everybody was situated, Mr. Newsome nudged his companion, and cleared his throat.

"Pardon me for asking, ma'am, aren't you "The Girl?" We're awfully curious about where you keep that pet alligator." I grinned.

"He was getting a bit hefty, so we put him back in the river. Oh, how I miss Mr. Slithers. No matter: our dear friend Major Durant is giving us dogs. Have a cookie." Liz interjected.

"Gentlemen, we invited you here to discuss something that happened several years ago. How well did you know Zack Colton, Billy Fields, and Gil McEvers?" After the two exchanged pained expressions, Mr. Wright spoke.

“My mama told me not to speak ill of the dead; but with Mr. Richard Peterson, I’ll make an exception. He was a son of a... uhm, he wasn’t the least bit gentlemanly. There used to be an old house at the place where River Street makes the turn east up to County Highway. The fellows called it “The Ranch.” After Sheriff Bert shut it down, the landlord leveled it; but while Dick Browning was sheriff, it was a wild place. He looked the other way for those who paid. There was beer, gambling, and certain ladies: the usual offerings of establishments of that sort. Railroad men were supposed to avoid those places. Most do. Zack was one of those who didn’t. He witnessed a man from the docks shot dead in the back lot by a deputy they called Benard. That might be his first name. I’m not sure. There wasn’t anything in the *Messenger* about anybody getting shot, so we figured Colton had a bit too much. About two weeks later, another deputy visited Peterson while we were clearing ditches in the great arc. I could swear an envelope passed between them. Towards the end of the shift, we couldn’t find Zack. As for Billy Fields and Gil McEvers, men in suits came for them. I don’t know the story behind it. Peterson told us to work further along the track out of sight. “Say nothing about this or those ‘constables’ will come for you next. In those days, we know running your mouth could get you killed. Now that Dick and Fred Wheeler are gone, what we say doesn’t mean much.” Liz asked Mr. Wright whether the men in suits wore badges and presented warrants. “Yes, ma’am, and they had fancy revolvers, not like the ones the deputies carry, but shiny ones with engravings. We knew they weren’t real lawmen.” At this point, Mr. Newsome joined the conversation.

“Peterson was afraid for his hide, too! That accident wasn’t accidental in our book. He had more sense than to cross in front of a moving streetcar. I’d say somebody shoved him. None of us were all that much grieved because he was a son of a... beekeeper, but the same thing happened to Judge Hastings. They blamed it on a loose paving stone. So, the same could happen to any one of us.”

“Hear anything about Pete Bresnahan?”

“No, that was before our time. Well, Browning, Wheeler, and Griggs probably had a hand in it.” I decided to ask a question.

“Did Browning really have a grip on everybody?”

“Not a chance, ma’am; just in the Northside. The workingmen and small shopkeepers were the ones he squeezed. The old families and city bigwigs could fight back. That’s exactly what happened when he jailed Judge Phelps’ girl. Herb Smallwood and his reformers cleaned house! ‘Big Boss’ Levesque pushed them to the top. Say, is it true you pulled that aviator from his busted up flying machine?”

“Agnes Tedder helped me.”

“That Agnes is a nice lady! Just wait until we tell the fellows about meeting you. Major Durant told the reporter from the *Messenger* that ‘The Girl’ was just talk. Our friends don’t believe a word of it. Now, we can tell them that everything we heard was so.”

“Except I no longer have a pet alligator.” Mr. Hennessy groaned. I never had one.

“Yes, that’s right; his name is Mr. Slithers. The newspaper man scribbled all sorts of things. Is the Chief Inspector your uncle?”

“Let’s see. If my grandfather’s nephew married Mr. Hennessy’s sister, and their daughter is my cousin – well, actually she is my aunt, so that must mean – no, I don’t think Mr. Hennessy is my great uncle by marriages and whatnot, or maybe, he is – and Miss Buchanan is my cousin, her mother was my grandmother’s brother’s daughter – that’s why she has such beautiful hair! – this is somewhat confusing. Alrighty, let’s just say you’re mostly correct.” The gentlemen looked

thoroughly consumed with parsing out my pedigree. “I baked these cookies last night. Take them with you.” They were delighted!

Our little social revealed several clues: the so called “special constables” were likely involved with the 1908 disappearance of Billy Fields, and Gil McEvers; Zack Colton disappeared after witnessing Deputy Benard shoot a patron of “The Ranch;” and Richard Peterson likely took payoffs to keep quiet. Sheriff Browning appeared to be the common link. He’s dead, so Benard is our only possible suspect, if he isn’t dead, too. Mr. Hennessy was satisfied with our findings and would pass them on to Sheriff Smallwood. My next task was to pick up the Pete Bresnahan inquiry where Ella left off. Drats! I must research articles published in the *Messenger* concerning Mr. Bresnahan’s political career. Hopefully, there might be some useful information about his family and place of birth. Mr. Quince would be accompanying me. That’s better. I like him!

Scandalous history

Reluctantly, Ella consulted our leading historian on local intrigue and dirty laundry, the glorious Liz. She was more than pleased to explain the convoluted and scandalous recent history of “The Family” beginning with the ascendancy of the local populist kingmaker Boss Joe Griggs. Some of it was familiar, but I was anxious to hear the parts Granddaddy James was unwilling to share.

“Mr. Griggs is the protégé and successor of Pete Bresnahan, the assumed leader of the Popular Coalition political club who mysteriously disappeared. It’s rumored he skipped town after assaulting Mrs. Lavinia Hall. That’s what my daddy heard somewhere – just hearsay if you ask me. Have you ever met Lavinia?”

“Never.”

“Few have; Lavinia keeps to herself in that sprawling house across from corporate headquarters.”

“What’s her place in the scheme of things?”

“That lady is the matriarch of ‘The Family’: the second wife of the late Captain Elias Hall, shipbuilder, whose son Claude married Lucy Culver, sister of Sam Culver. Claude died of pneumonia and Lucy has delusions, so Lavinia and Jane Deschamps set up an arrangement: Jane took Lucy’s boy Miles, and Lavinia continues to care for Lucy. A Smallwood relative named Emma Waddell helps out with the latter. That girl also works in our freight office. Lavinia’s twin sister Beatrice was married to John Culver. John went on a hunting trip in Northeast Township with Alan Deschamps, nephew of Georges Deschamps, and his friends. Mr. Culver drank too much, walked out on the railroad bridge, fell off and died in the river. Alan was married to Catherine, the sister of Anna LeQuire Levesque. Catherine died under suspicious circumstances. When Alan and Beatrice married, it was scandalous! Jane was born a bit early, too – she was in my graduating class. Would you believe Sam and Jane are business partners?”

“What does that have to do with Boss Griggs?”

“Originally, Captain Hall, John Culver, Alan Deschamps, and the ‘old guard’ conservatives supported the Popular Coalition. Their candidates ran in opposition to the newcomer career politicians.”

“During the leadership of Bresnahan?”

“Yes, but they soured on him during the building of the new courthouse. I’m not sure of the particulars. Easily, it is the most opulent public building in the region, not to question the magnificence of Unity Station but the building is extravagant and was too costly. All the improvements of the Bresnahan Era were ambitious and a drain on the public coffers. The great

boondoggle of the time according to the conservatives was County Highway, so they opposed it. Now, we need it."

"Was Griggs more pliable?"

"In the beginning, yes. Then again, who else could they back? The businessmen and industrialists of the City of Port Unity backed candidates with a 'progress' platform. 'The Family' wanted to set back the clock. They discovered too late that the true 'Griggs Machine' agenda was transforming county government into the politicians' personal money mill rather than rally the vassals to low taxes and reestablishing the old social hierarchy. By 1904, Boss Griggs managed to fill every department with his shady cronies. Sheriff Dick Browning was a stinker, and Judge Hastings, too. Conservative District Attorney Kerns charged Commissioner Fred Wheeler with taking bribes for rigging contracts for County Highway. Judge Phelps, whose niece Clarisse married attorney and former state senator Herbert Smallwood, presided over the case – "Bert" is the baby brother of Lavinia and Beatrice. Somebody shot Judge Phelps behind the courthouse during the trial, and nobody came forward to identify the culprit. It was a boon for Wheeler. Judge Hastings stepped in, the witnesses for the prosecution vanished, and Hastings threw out the case. Certainly, it was a last-ditch effort to save Wheeler. He could have implicated other commissioners. The whole business set in motion the reform movement. Fred turned up later floating in the river. Now, we get to Judge Phelps' daughter Florence. I went to college with her – we called her Boudica. She pestered Sheriff Browning about the stalled investigation into the murder of her daddy. He ignored her, so that girl started asking questions on her own. Browning arrested her for interfering, but instead of taking her to jail, he locked Florence in the jail wagon heading for the county prison farm and didn't file charges until the overseer at her place paid a visit to Mr. Smallwood. She was set free for trial, and Smallwood took the matter up with the state attorney general. Browning dropped the charges. Sam tasked two of his 'private detectives' with helping Florence uncover evidence of a conspiracy devised by Griggs to obstruct the murder investigations. They found nothing. Despite all the finger-pointing, no prosecutor has ever been able to pin any mischief directly on him! Florence then assumed the guise of an office girl and took a job with Whitaker & Blackwell. She hoped to find proof that Browning extorted cash from businesses in the railroad district to 'protect' their property. One day, thugs masquerading as 'special constables' abducted her in broad daylight. After keeping her in a dark cellar for several days without food and water, the men dumped her unconscious on the drive leading to her farm. A year passed before Florence told Sheriff Smallwood about her ordeal. Are you following me so far?"

"Yes, but most of this part is new to me."

"I'm sure; Lavinia and Sam kept the whole sordid mess from the public. 'The Family' protects its own. I suspect that is the same reason why the Messenger never printed anything about the disappearance of Mr. Bresnahan."

"Goodness!"

"Sheriff Smallwood started off by investigating Dick Browning, but the scoundrel shot himself before the district attorney could file charges. He then rid county government of turncoat employees planted by Griggs."

"That didn't cripple the Popular Coalition."

"Of course not. Cato Houghton, son of its original financier, ousted Boss Griggs, and then installed Orrin Blackwell as the new chairman. He opposed Griggs and Browning but did not start working against them until 'Old Man Calvin' died. Cato is a true believer in the cause and the dead opposite of his daddy. As a businessman, he has interest beyond the family metalworks,

namely real estate. This is where it gets sticky. After the Great Fire of 1883, the company sold a large parcel of burnt-over timberland between Rose and Mulberry stretching from First to Ninth. Alan Deschamps bought all of it, and then sold lots to Elias Hall and a whole block to Consolidated Cotton Works, now Cowan Cotton & Fabric. Captain Hall sold some of his lots to people wanting to build businesses and family houses. The rest of the lots Alan sold to a group of five speculators, Joe Griggs and his second Fred Wheeler being two of them. They pooled their money to buy most of it. Quickly they threw up tenements to house workers from the depot and cotton works. Eventually, an unhealthy neighborhood formed between Sixth and Ninth. Nevertheless, the county begrudgingly relinquished to the city the brick-paved corridor through North First Avenue. Cato and company are holding on to their land waiting to sell at a premium, but Sam Culver and Jane Deschamps are not going to buy any of it until annexation, which at that time the imposition of city building codes will force the landlords to sell low. One exception: Sam is hoping to make a deal with the owner of the cotton works, the anticipated site of his grand hotel. It's ideal: a whole block located near the station. His goal is to revive the annexation referendum and support reform candidates to unseat the rest of the holdouts in county government.

"Anybody else in this stew?"

"Plenty! Griggs' loyalists, disinterested hirelings, Laine County bootleggers, dubious outside businessmen, and the local criminal element: just because Browning and Wheeler are gone doesn't mean it's safe."

"Is that why Uncle Roscoe insists that I learn how to thwart kidnapers?"

"No. We must acquire those skills because it is in the best interest of the company."

Apply the brakes!

Mr. Hennessy's inquiry lurched forward after I visited the *Messenger* office and then ventured over to the city hall library to speak with Leona Jenkins, the curator of local manuscripts including the papers of the late Nester Horne. At the former, I found an article about the lady assaulted by hoodlums and beaten unconscious. The culprits were unknown ruffians from the docks. The *Messenger* withheld her name, but the location of the crime was "near the carriage entrance to her home on North Second." Upon returning to corporate headquarters, I examined our 1890 volume of the fire insurance maps for Port Unity. The only residence on North Second with such an entrance then and now was the home of Captain Elias Hall, at the corner of Mulberry and North Second. Leona Jenkins helped me find other missing pieces.

Mr. Horne, a reporter who turned away from journalism to write fiction, left behind notes for an article on Bresnahan that the editor refused to print. Pertinent to our inquiry was a copy of the published article about the unnamed woman beaten by hoodlums. Mr. Horne circled "North Second Street." In his notes he wrote, "Mrs. S., the housekeeper, told me that Mr. H. became enraged with his wife and struck her repeatedly about the head, leaving her unconscious in the backyard. His son found her, loaded her into his buggy, and then took her to the hospital. When the lady awoke the next day, she claimed hoodlums wanting money assaulted her. I paid Mrs. S. and promised not to include her name in my article." Scribbled across the text in another hand is "We can't print this!" So, it looks like Mr. Horne was a reporter for the *Messenger* at the time. Miss Jenkins directed my attention to another note. This one was an interview with Mr. P. a resident of the Northside.

A certain gentleman of the neighborhood gave me twenty dollars to rent my buckboard and a mule for a day four years ago. It was the first week of June. That's a lot of money for just a

day! He said his boy would come by for it at dark on Tuesday. Strange, I thought, but nobody questions the big man. I'm not going to say who he is. When the boy came for it, he was jittery and a bit queasy. I asked him what's the matter. After muttering several sharp curses, he said a 'highhanded old bastard' roped his papa into taking a rascal out of town. I told the boy that was enough I didn't want to know any more. "No, sir, they don't plan to string him up! After the relatives of the lady give him a whipping, they're rowing him across the river and sending him on with a warning not to come back." Oh, it's those things. The next day, the boy brought back my buckboard. He smelled of pine smoke and liquor. I asked him whether they gave the fellow a good send-off. "I suppose so. Even the lady's sister stopped by to join the party."

Mr. Horne scribbled on the page that he paid Mr. P. five dollars and two bottles of good whiskey for the interview. Once again, he promised to keep the man's name secret. The last of his notes, dated February 17, 1894, describes how Mr. C. "went on one of his weekend drunks" and ended up stumbling into the *Messenger* office. He wanted to place a notice in the Sunday issue: "PETE WAS AN INNOCENT MAN!" Momentarily, Mr. D. entered, pocketed the form on which Mr. C. scrawled the notice, and took him back to their carriage. Was that all?

Frank set to work trying to find Mrs. S. and Mr. P. in the 1890-91 city directory. The occupation of Mrs. Alma Simms, widow, who rented at 301 Walnut, was a housekeeper. That's only a few blocks from the Hall residence. No other woman listed under "S" performed that type of work. Unfortunately, the directory entry did not include the name of her employer as with those of men. Louis considered the possibility that a married woman performing the same work might not appear in the directory. It listed three men with last names beginning with "P" who resided in the Northside: Luther Polk, a foundryman who worked for Houghton Metalworks; Jack Poisson, owner of a grocery; and Richard Peterson, a track crew foreman. Ah-ha! There's our son of a beekeeper! We found none of them in the current city directory; however, Mr. Poisson's grocery was still in business at the same address, Milly Fremont, proprietor. Mrs. Simms was absent, too.

Though Mr. Hennessy praised our work, he said we must abandon the inquiry. Sheriff Smallwood confirmed that a deputy named George Benard once worked for Sheriff Browning, but he left in 1905. He'll try to find him, if possible. Even so, we cannot prove he shot anybody. Captain Hall is dead, his son is dead, Richard Peterson is dead, Nester Horne is dead, and Mr. Buchanan does not want us upsetting the widow Lavinia Hall. Her attorney is an "unreasonable jackass" who wouldn't think twice about drawing the railroad into a lawsuit. It is best to drop the Bresnahan inquiry." Lavinia is the matriarch of "The Family," and is the principal shareholder in the Hall Shipbuilding Company. "As things stand, we cannot prove anything with physical evidence and a living witness." Mr. Hennessy told me to resume my training with Captain Johnston.

The Historical Conundrum

This whole assignment has been frustrating. So, since I have nothing better to do, let's put the problem to the test. Alrighty, remember my philosophizing? No?

It is awfully sensible to know the difference between what we don't know and what we can't know, why knowing this or that is worth knowing, and there might be some interesting facts strewn along the path that leads to nowhere, so general knowledge is useful for determining what the unknowable is not.

What do I know about Demon Pete? Nothing! It follows that knowing what I can't know has one answer: I don't know. Ella and the Major spoke with Agnes Tedder about him, but that girl heard about the rascal from her late daddy, and he was wrong about the graves on the Murray-Hecke land. Nester Horne never mentioned Demon Pete in his book only the ghost of Mr. Bresnahan, and he made that up. So, I do know something, and it is all tommyrot. Pete Bresnahan is more knowable. Since he was a public figure, the *Messenger* has plenty of articles about his speeches, but nothing particular about the man or from whence he came. The Popular Coalition offices are on the north side of the Fourth Street Bridge so I thought paying them a visit might help. Not only did they not keep his correspondences and the texts of his speeches, but they also didn't have his picture. The only thing they kept was his ledger. Mr. Orrin Blackwell, who was a boy when Bresnahan disappeared, told me that Calvin Houghton recruited him from somewhere because he was a persuasive orator. It's hard to say whether he was a genuine populist politician, but he had grand ideas. Alrighty, even an accurate assessment of the man and his ideals is impossible (given what we know). So? Mr. Hennessy is not writing his biography.

After all these years, nobody knows what happen to Mr. Bresnahan: that's something I know that I don't know but it is not necessarily unknowable just because nobody else knows. Hmm, right... To declare that something is unknowable, I must first prove it meets the specific conditions. This isn't easy! The unknowable is forever incomplete. We know some parts of it, whereas the unknown is potentially knowable if we knew where to start our inquiry, or it never occur to us. The conclusions are tenuous and unsatisfying – not a wise undertaking for the obsessive sort – but there isn't any continuing. You have parts of something, hopefully more than when you started but not enough. The knowable part has parts and parts of parts, some could be parts of something else entirely, connect to a missing part, or turn out to be tommyrot. Some parts appear to fit together nicely until you find one with the perfect fit; and then, you have an orphan part left over which doesn't fall into place anywhere. That means you're further away from knowing than you thought: the boundary of the unknown expands to include any part fitting with your orphan part, and to those parts, and more to those, and so on until everything knowable fits together or you discover it's something completely different. Uh-huh, you wasted all that time trying to solve the wrong problem.

The European Ruckus

Granddaddy James called together his circle to discuss the free-for-all taking place in the bakery of empires. The gentlemen didn't see it coming, though Mr. Hennessy said the clever diplomats fashioned tripwire treaties that would make such an outcome possible. From what I gather, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, which brought in Russia, and the latter's ally, France, and Austria-Hungary's ally, Germany. The Kaiser's generals thought it was clever to take a shortcut through Belgium to attack the French, so the British and their Dominions joined in the fray. I think that's it for now. Still, it looks like a big one. The gentlemen are concerned about how it might alter commerce on our line. Who can say? The Major thinks the present situation is without precedence, though predictable. Peace was possible when rival alliances were evenly matched. He cited Russia's defeat by Japan as a recent sign that a serious imbalance was developing. Certainly, the rest of Europe took notice. By contrast, their perpetual adversary the Ottoman Empire fell back in the Balkans and Caucasus beginning in the late 1870s, the liberated Slavic nations allied with Russia. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) enabled the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary to check Russian expansion. All this was fascinating! As for the outcome, the Major

imagined that Britain and Germany will be the last to fight it out. The rest will fold if a quick victory is not forthcoming. Mr. Hennessy has been reading a recently published book *Influences of Geographic Environment* by Ellen Churchill Semple, a student of Friedrich Ratzel. The premise of the work, if I understand correctly, is that “Land is the basis of society” and the nature of the physical environment influences the behavior of the people who inhabit it. There are natural factors particular to a place that can inhibit or promote civilization and prosperity. It can force a people to migrate or engender an ambition to expand their boundaries. In this light, it is easy to understand a longstanding desire by some to gain control over the Balkans and the Black Sea. Peter the Great sought to capture Azov at the mouth of the Don from the Turks. His successors have renewed similar adventures periodically. The Crimean War was the most notable conflict of this sort in the past century. Mr. McNair produced some statistics on the combatants and had several pages of calculations. He determined that the principal belligerents possess the essential means to wage war for years. Britain, France, and Germany have complex economies built upon manufacturing and finance, their export markets are extensive, and each has their colonies. It is difficult to imagine how they’re politicians would risk all this. Well, they did. What better time to start a war than after recovering from the last one. Mr. McNair continued by noting that a war involving so many countries cannot be concluded by capturing an adversary’s capital in one campaign. Whole nations could walk away from the fight and the war would continue. So, what did the gentlemen determine was the appropriate measure the company should take to protect their interests? Nothing. If transatlantic commerce diminished, the port would feel it first. Domestic products account for three-fourths of the freight the company transports over its lines, not counting imports from the rest of the Americas. We can adapt. If the war continues for an extended period, manufacturers within our country will fill the vacuum created by the absence of the European product.

For me, this discussion was quite informative. Though it resulted in the decision not to implement changes, though I doubted whether they had yet to formulate any, it was productive inasmuch as the gentlemen thought it best to assess the current situation. Their conclusion might be entirely wrong, but they tried. Aside, I wanted to acquire a copy of Ellen Semple’s book if Mr. Hennessy was reading it. Though we rarely mention the fact that he is a respected scholar, his professorial ramblings are always filled with insightful tidbits.

It is too early to speculate on how this madness will unfold. What surprises me is how quickly the squabble between Austria-Hungary and Serbia bloomed into an epic rumpus. Were we not paying attention?

Fall assignments

Ladies, do you want to hear something complicated? No? Well, it’s not that complicated. Freight trains are moving over the entire expanse of the line day and night, so exhaustive planning goes in to making up trains. The Freight Train Manifest for a route contains staging to staging details from origin to destination: engine number, yard tract number, siding number, the car number, railroad to which the car belongs, the type of car (boxcar, gondola, grain hopper, caboose, and so forth), length of cars, empty or full cars, total length, total tonnage. That’s just the origin! Along the route, there are details about what cars to pull or spot. The manifest contains recalculation for total length and tonnage for these changes. This is not a slipshod process: a single locomotive can only pull so much; the line has heavy rails in the main corridors and standard on the spurs, therefore weight is an important consideration; a train made up of mostly empty cars is not making money for the company, but if shippers don’t have enough of them, that causes an avoidable constriction of the flow of goods. The Manifest Division of our Transportation

Department has card catalogue indices for the “Origin” and “Destination” files. It also contains signed copies of the shippers’ Bill of Lading for the contents of each car of the train. Together, these documents provide a detailed description of the goods transported from one party to another.

With few exceptions the freight trains pull and spot cars from the yards on the main lines. Local freight trains bring them there from the spurs along which many shippers have their establishments. It is a complicated undertaking involving a host of managers across the line working in concert. Furthermore, the Transportation Department synchronizes our schedules with other railroads and oceangoing shipping companies for freight passing through to destinations beyond. That the offices of the department take up three floors seems a conservative allotment.

So, do I pass? Not without some practical experience. Mr. Hennessy is sending me to Unity Bluff Station to help with the paperwork for its freight yard. No matter: I get to chat with Agnes every day and learn all the wonderful details about her romance with Mr. Ashcraft. I know she wants to marry him! Imagine if the love of your life literally fell from the sky into your arms – ha-ha-ha!

Every workday, Sergeant Quince gives me a ride to Unity Bluff Station and back in the Major’s 1912 Oldsmobile *Autocrat* touring car. It has a four-cylinder, forty horsepower engine! Being a railroad girl, I probably shouldn’t advertise my fascination with motorcars, but I can’t help myself. We creep along on the dirt road fronting the river. Such a delightful view! Phillip takes me back in the afternoon to finish my shift. I think he is becoming my latest favorite. He shares the news about the European war. Neither one of us are sure how it started. Like other foreign wars, the longer it goes on, the less people follow it, particularly when we’re not in it. Let’s keep it that way.

Unity Bluff Station is a freight depot with an array of six tracks with turnouts (or body tracks connected by a ladder track) for cars scheduled to continue north or south without entering the terminal’s classification yard. There are turnouts on both ends of these tracks to accommodate trains traveling north or south on the double track running through it. None are destined for or originate at Port Unity, and usually continue their journey on one of the branch lines. This arrangement eliminates delays; and since the trains that pull and spot these cars do not originate in the terminal, the trains made up in our yards do not need to deviate from their schedules to spot them in yards not on their usual routes. Except for the overnight passenger trains, the station is not open for patrons. At all times, two men manage the freight yard in addition to the two coal and water stations for the north and south tracks continuing on to the main trunk. They maintain a running inventory of the rolling stock in their yard and ensure that the cars are staged in order so the trains receiving them can back into the turnouts, and couple onto their addition. Agnes double-checks the inventories against the manifests, reports missing or left behind cars (the latter, usually in dire need of maintenance in our shops but sometimes by a freight conductor’s mistake), she operates the telegraph and telephone, and reports directly to the managers in the Manifest Division. Her daddy held the same position for decades, so she received an exceptional education in the job, and is prepared to address all exigencies. Mr. Hennessy gives me mind-boggling assignments from the archives because he thinks I have nothing better to do. With Agnes, that assumption might be true. The girl dwells alone in her cottage abutting a pine forest, no neighbors, and miles away from town. To shop for necessities, she must telephone her order and have the items brought by the delivery van. The mail she receives arrives at corporate headquarters and in turn dispatched to her

in a company pouch. When she must go into the city, the track foreman takes her to the upper yards on the velocipede when the tracks are clear, and she must walk to Unity Station to meet the trolley.

“Agnes, you must tell me about Mr. Ashcraft!”

“He’s building a new flying machine.”

“What about marriage?”

“Of course, I’ll marry him after he gives up flying. I don’t want to be a bride one day and a widow the next.”

“As my granddaddy says, ‘Don’t squander a good thing while you have it.’”

“What does that mean?”

“Don’t let an opportunity pass you by because it might not come around again. I suppose that is close enough. Honestly, I’m not sure what he means... It just sounds like prudent advice.”

“What about you?”

“I settled on one of my favorites, but he doesn’t know it. None of my favorites know that they are favorites, probably because I bake cookies for all of them, and my two approved suitors – they’re brothers so I don’t want to get between them – but they haven’t shown any signs of wanting me, but they sure like having me around. No matter: next fall, I’ll start ladies’ college in the mountains. That’s four years without fellows, except during the summers, and then *all* of them will be my favorites! I’m not picky.”

“I like butter cookies.”

“How about ginger snaps?”

“I like those, too.”

“You’re in luck! I have a sack of them in my satchel. Put on the kettle, and we’ll have tea and cookies.”

“I don’t have tea. How about coffee?”

“That would be wonderful!”

Agnes is not much of a conversationalist, but my chattering makes up for the difference. Even so, I learned that she started work in the Manifest Division when she was sixteen, and then took over for her daddy at Unity Bluff when his health started failing. She has been working there ever since. When I brought up the unsolved case of the missing railroad men, her response was quite lively.

“So, those men were not in the old burying ground. That doesn’t mean a thing. There are lots of places out there to hide a body. Has anybody been out there further than the old house? No! Except for me, nobody. That means it might be helpful if the two of us take a look.

I was surprised to see many freight trains spotting cars in Unity Bluff Yard, most bypassing the terminal altogether. Every few hours, another train would arrive to pull them on the next leg of their journey. I could have never imagined such a remote station would be so busy. The junction on the opposite side of the river is the reason: four lines from different directions converge at this point. It is the mirror image of our joint company hub at the northern terminus of our railroad.

On the second Sunday of October, I persuaded Major Durant to accompany Agnes and I on our little expedition into the Paradise tract. Our objective was to follow the old colonial road to the river landing at its end. Though the company had neglected this potentially useful section of its holdings for decades, the Major recommended having it resurveyed on several occasions for a safe housing community for company workers. Mr. McNair didn’t care for the idea because the only way to access it would be by Eighth Street, the only public thoroughfare passing through the

terminal. It separated the passenger yard and upper yards. Without the road extending beyond Haynes Boundary Street on the north side of the terminal, the street presented problems. Pedestrians and vehicles must cross the tracks coming up from the lower yards and the six tracks leading to the passenger yard. At three-hour intervals from six in the morning to midnight, watchmen close the road for the arriving and departing trains. Presently, workers in the upper yards live in the neighborhood immediately north of the terminal, and use Haynes Street to come to work. Housing them on the Paradise tract means they must cross the double track coming off the apex of the great arc connecting to the main trunk above the upper yards. That would be two miles further from the terminal. Granddaddy James is not fond of the scheme because the vast freight yard in the upper yards extends into the upper reaches of the Paradise tract. Bounded by the mill creek and swamp, the only direction to expand this yard is building further into the Major's proposed community. Extending Eighth Street would mean it would cross the projected expansion. Instead, he wants an apartment building on the unused plot on the Walnut Street end of corporate headquarters to house clerical workers. I'll save that for another time. Let's just say Major Durant wanted to explore with us and leave it at that.

Using a stick of railroad chalk, Agnes marked the trees in the event that we strayed off the paths, that is, when we found them. For the most part, the landscape beyond the ruins is a dense stand of pines with a combination of turkey oaks, scrub, and thorny vines. It was slow going. The Major thought we should have brought along a bush axe. When we reach the old road, there was hardly any vegetation. Beneath the sand, the soil was compacted and cut with ruts, the result of two centuries of use: first, by ox carts, and then, the logging wagons. During the years the original forest was leveled for wood burners, the road continued directly through Houghton Ironworks to connect with the River Road after it curves east. From there, the wagons carrying firewood took the River Road to the steamboat slips. Firewood for the locomotives was brought up the bluff by a stationary engine. I discovered this by studying the annual reports. When the steamboat line was discontinued in the 1850s, the wagons took the wood to a spur put down to Unity Bluff. It was eventually incorporated into the great arc.

All of this history is interesting, don't you think? No? Well, we spent Sunday afternoon, searching for who-knows-what, and found truly little, except ticks. No grave mounds, and encampments, as our imaginations conjured up. We followed the old road to the ferry landing. There, we could see remnants of its twin on the opposite side of the Northeast River. Once there was a road leading from it into Laine County. Unlike our section, it was likely abandoned when the river was bridged at Northeast Depot in the 1830s. Exploring the pathway leading to the great arc, we found relics from the time when the land was logged. These included broken crosscut blades, discarded axe handles, logging chains, and iron wedges. There was an empty tumble-down shack that we presumed was the foreman's office. Since this site was so close to the great arc, it might date from the end of the wood burner era. Apparently, they were loading the cut wood onto rail cars by this time. Major Durant came across the stump of an old live oak. He estimated that it was likely hundreds of years old when the loggers took it down. It's too bad they didn't save it.

With our remaining sunshine limited, we emerged into the great arc, walking on the dirt service road two and a half miles back to the station. The six o'clock southbound thundered past us by the time we reached the station. While we only explored a small section of the Paradise tract, the pathways cutting through it seemed to be the most practical to accomplish a quick departure from the great arc. If the kidnappers had a boat waiting at the landing, they could row upstream several miles to Haugh Landing or cross over to the wilds of Laine County. The old colonial road offered the only direct path for entering or leaving the Paradise tract. North of the wharf at Unity

Bluff Station, there wasn't another landing until after passing the confluence of the two branches of the river. The Northeast River has its first at the colonial road; by contrast, the first landing on the Southwest River is upstream, ten miles south of the confluence. The Major told us that his officers searched the Paradise tract thoroughly after the railroad men disappeared, but they didn't find anybody. That suggests that the kidnappers left quickly.

I doubt whether our Sunday expedition set us upon the path to solving the mystery of the disappearance of the railroad men, but we now had a practical understanding of how the culprits might have slipped away with their victims. That's better than studying old maps. With the Major's officers conducting a search of the tract shortly after the men were reported missing it seemed unlikely that those who perpetrated the crime would dally close by with the possibility the officers might cut off their escape route. Certainly, if Dick Browning were behind the plot, he wouldn't want his hirelings caught committing a crime on railroad property. Aside, we expected to find evidence of trespassing by others such as poachers and tramps but telltale debris from their encampments was absent. I suspect the deep excavations for the great arc along with having to pass through the upper yards to access the land discouraged all but the most determined interlopers. It appears Agnes' daddy was the exception. So, what about bootleggers? The northeastern quadrant of the county offers better sites.

By assignment at Unity Bluff Station ended during the first week of November. I wish there were something remarkable to report about the month I spent there but the whole complex business of matching cars to their trains went smoothly. The overnight crew never left us problems, nor did we leave them any. Mr. G. Jamison, one of the duo managing the yard noted that his job was easier than working in the other freight yards of the terminal. I suppose so. The upper yards have a receiving yard and a classification yard, in addition to its own machine shops. Our lower yards are technically a separate rail and water terminal where ocean going freight is loaded and received. Tracks run out onto the company wharves. Even so, the trains coming up from the lower yards take all but the local cars directly to the hub at Wayne City. Here, freight trains are made up from cars arriving from all the connecting lines whereas those made up in the upper yards continue on to other terminals on the north to south corridor. If Port Unity weren't the only large port on our railroad locating corporate headquarters here would be impractical. Unlike our facilities at Wayne City, the terminal has less space to grow. Other than the Paradise tract, the land beyond Unity Bluff is prone to flooding. The most promising site for new freight yards is the undeveloped land near the South Docks. We have a spur running there that splits off from the main trunk above the city. In recent years, several of the mills once located on the Northside removed to new facilities there. We are witnessing the transformation of Port Unity from a compact mix of residential neighborhoods, businesses, and industries to suburban communities, business districts, and industrial clusters linked by the trolley lines. I imagine automobiles will allow for a further expansion of the city into the rural quadrants of the county. Sam Culver bought the abandoned plantations on the Northeast River between the swampland and Haynes Town, so I suspect that he foresees the possibility of developing them in the near future. If we happen to find ourselves involved in the European war, this land is situated near the river, County Highway, and the main trunk making it ideal for war production sites. Granddaddy James pays attention to such things and encourages me to do likewise.

Mr. McNair's terminal

On the third floor of our house is a model of the terminal as conceived by Mr. McNair in 1904. Aside from a few additions, most of the construction was completed by 1912. What remains is replacing the masonry retaining walls in the inclined plane leading to the lower yards with those of reinforced concrete. The lower yards also require some improvements. He is considering using the grown over strip of land on the south side of the inclined plane for an access road for company use. This is where I won the footrace with the station officers.

Presently, the models of the earlier manifestations of the terminal are on display in Unity Station but the 1904 model appears only in photographs. Being of a larger scale, it would take up too much valuable space in the station. At twenty-two by sixteen feet, there is hardly enough space to move about in the room where it is kept! Mr. McNair and his assistants built it so Granddaddy James could ponder the whole plan in a glance. With most of the new buildings completed, the Major is the only visitor who spends time studying it. For the most part, Ella and I still observe the "Do not touch" rule, excluding populating the model with figurines, fancy medieval chess pieces, and sundry toy animals. Using billiard cues is the only way to position some. As of late, we added a few miniature automobiles.

My building

Tomfooleries aside, my current assignment in the Engineering Department concerns an insignificant wooden hut in the lower yards that is used by the yardmaster as an office. Mr. McNair didn't consider doing so in 1904 because he was working on bigger and better things. Now, he wants to replace it with a brick building, so he set a crew to work on excavating for the foundation. Guess what they found! No, not that – ha-ha-ha! They uncovered a masonry-lined pit that once was the base of a large turntable. Uh-huh, another subsurface structure from the distant past that nobody knew was there. Mr. McNair wants me to spend a few days in the chilly weather making measurements and taking photographs of this new find; and when that's done, prepare a set of drawings. He's contemplating building a Roman style cylindrical building upon the circular stone walls of the turntable. What? Oh yes, it will have a dome roof topped with a decorative finial. I made the mistake of recommending an octangular building with windows on all sides, even in the door, so the yardmaster could observe traffic in a glance. It would require some modifications to the foundation, but the building would be more practical. He liked the idea; so, since I had nothing better to do, the design of the building is my responsibility. It must be in a style that harmonizes with his Classical Revival station. Goodness! Also, he wants a materials list and cost estimate for the building minus amenities save a lavatory. Lavatory? There goes a window. I suppose in the rear of the building near the door because there's nothing to see back there. After doing all this work, I'm going to construct a replica in miniature to glue to his model.

"Company papers and pass? Well, something happened to them. The new ones are in Mr. Hennessy's office, but I haven't stop by to...hmm, right. No matter: you caught me this time – 'rules are rules, no exceptions' – so, where are your cuffs? ... Try the other pocket..."

Albert McComber – one of my favorites – was a bit nervous about *really* arresting me. In fact, he did quite well despite his reservations. Afterwards, I assured him that nothing about it upset me in the least. It was my fault entirely. Eager to examine the recently excavated turntable, I deliberately risked entering a posted area without my documents. On delivering me to the office, Albert filled out the paperwork. Anticipating that this would happen eventually, Captain Johnston typed up five reports in advance. All the officer must do is fill in the date, time, and location, then

sign. That way, they can minimize the duration that they must endure my chatter. Fortunately, the weather was cool this time, no flies, and I was wearing my hair in a ponytail. After Captain Johnston telephoned Mr. Hennessy's office, Liz arrived a half-hour later with my new documents. She thought it was funny that I was finally caught. [*You can't say we didn't warn you.*] Once free, I returned to my work.

Albeit small, I never anticipated designing a building by myself at my youthful age but there are many things that the gentlemen threw me into where the busywork of my practical education helped. In this case, I knew enough about preparing architectural drawings and calculating material lists to muddle through. My choice of style that would harmonize with the station was Romanesque. Since Mr. McNair wanted to use brick, the eight walls were Flemish bond with arched windows. The door also was set within an arch. Instead of a dome, I found a framing diagram for an octagonal roof in a carpentry text where the common and hip rafters meet at a king post. It involves some precise mitering but is worth the effort. I recommended copper for the sheathing and finial. The floor is wood. Beneath it, I added brick piers for support. Mr. McNair wanted a chimney, so I lost another rear window. In the end, he decided to add four feet of reenforced concrete to the height of the stone walls and a porch. Frustrated at this point, I suggested that we save the expense by building the structure in wood and install a stove pipe instead of a brick chimney. He like the idea so I prepared a new set of drawings and materials list. The next snag was the roof: he wanted slate; I wanted copper. We settled on tin plated sheet iron. The siding was board and batten painted light gray with white trim. Currently, he wants the tin roof painted with black enamel. Goodness! So much fuss over a building few will ever notice.

Work began this morning on constructing an octangular concrete foundation skirting the circular wall of the turntable. Mr. McNair decided to enlarge the dimensions of my design, avoiding placing weight upon the ancient stonework. I must prepare a new set of drawings and materials list. Drats!

Bones

Earlier this month, Sam Culver hired a crew to clear away some of the undergrowth surrounding the ruins of the old Haynes Plantation house in Northeast Township. Having received accolades for his efforts to have the bones of the Murray family move to a prominent spot in the county's main cemetery he was determined to do likewise with the remains of another founding family, the Haynes of the Northeast River. Why not? He owned the land. From the start, everything was going well. His men found the burying ground close to where we abandoned our search this past summer. The tombstones, toppled over and broken, remained in close proximity to their graves and the text carved into them was intelligible. The director of the cemeteries and workers from several funeral parlors commenced the exhumation of the remains along with coffin fragments, hardware, and sundry personal artifacts. The esteemed Dr. Willis was present to answer questions about the Haynes family. Dr. Cordell, the county coroner, stood by observing the enterprise. In all, the crew exhumed twenty-one graves dating from 1732 to 1854; and off to the side, a lone unmarked plot containing a peculiar skeleton. There were no fragments of a casket; the tatters of clothing, tarnished belt buckle, rotting leather shoes, and a scattering of imperishable items suggested a more recent burial. On close examination, Dr. Cordell found a horrific bullet hole in the rear of the skull, the said projectile exiting the eye socket. It was time to bring in Sheriff Smallwood. This was a murder victim! So, did these remains belong to Pete Bresnahan?

Dr. Cordell was able to date the manufactured belt buckle, buttons, and fragments of shoes to the 1880s. It could be Pete but... he needed a description to draw a comparison. The Popular Coalition did not have a photograph of the man nor was there a consensus amongst the current membership as to his physical characteristics. Surprisingly, his image never appeared in the Messenger. The editor, Mr. Benson, told Deputy Wilkes that Mr. Bresnahan was best known by the coalition leadership of the day, most of which are deceased. Other citizens of the county knew him on sight, but his disappearance went unnoticed until Mr. Horne published his stories; thus, the fallibility of memory can account for the varying descriptions offered by the public. The only person living who could help was Boss Joe Griggs. Despite the animosity he nurtures for the sheriff, Mr. Griggs provided Deputy Wilkes with a detailed description of Mr. Bresnahan in writing. Dr. Cordell acknowledged that it was accurate for the skeleton's height and build but that could easily apply for dozens of average men. The case remains unresolved at present. The coroner stored the bones in the basement of his office. They are eventually destined for a plot in Potters Field when no longer needed in the investigation. Even so, he received several inquiries from individuals wanting to buy the bones for display as a curiosity. Goodness!

Without question, Granddaddy James knows local politics. I asked him whether he remembered anything about Pete Bresnahan. He recalled hearing the name but never met the man. However, he had many irritating encounters with Calvin Houghton, Fred Wheeler, and Dick Browning. His descriptions of each man's form and physiognomy were entertaining. At this point, I am beginning to suspect that Pete was an ordinary fellow who performed his work in the wings and became legendary after his disappearance, more precisely, because Nester Horne embellished his reputation.

Mr. Hennessy told me not to spend too much time thinking about the case. Aside from having nothing to do with the railroad, Sheriff Smallwood needed the testimony of eyewitnesses to determine everything from the identity of the man whose bones Sam Culver's crew exhumed to who shot and buried him. At present, the legend of Pete Bresnahan is a distraction inasmuch as his fiendish mythical counterpart Demon Pete misdirected our efforts.

Seasonal duties

It's December – hurrah! Expecting business will pick up, Ella and I are assigned to the Office of Station Police through the beginning of 1915. I maintain records, take photographs of the folks the officers bring in, and sit with any woman they arrest. My sister searches the ladies for contraband and dangerous items, fingerprints them, and assists Captain Johnston. Both of us alternate surveilling the station and concourse in disguise with a station officer following close behind. We have yet to have any 'customers,' but the annual hubbub is just getting started. With all my Saturday work thus far, I have earned thirty-eight and a half hours of practical training. As for my building, the carpenters framed it, so it might be complete in a week.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUNDRY ASSIGNMENTS, 1915

Greetings! The Levesque Sisters are back after a brief respite from our marvelous adventures. In January, we worked predictable routines for a month: Ella returned to her usual duties in the station's police office, and Mr. Deschamps kept me busy with freight train manifests in the Transportation Department. On Fridays, I received my scheduled officer instruction with Major Durant and played bait for the thieving rascals who prowl the station. We caught several this way! Starting in February, Mr. McNair had me back in the Engineering Department drafting. No sooner had I started, Mr. Hennessy had a special assignment for me. Drats!

The Spur

The boss wanted me to tagalong with Major Durant on his visit to Abbott's Town Station, a curious waystop seventy-six miles south of Port Unity. It is nothing more than a crossroads in the middle of a pine forest with a station having an attached warehouse. On the opposite side of the tracks is the general store and post office. Mr. Culver purchased large tracts of forestland fronting the railroad on both sides and is presently having a sawmill built to cut the downed trees into lumber as he clears the tracts to create another truck farming community. His agricultural advisor thinks the land is ideal for strawberries. That might be true, but we must provide refrigerated cars to transport the harvest. Even early in the summer, the sweltering heat of midday is nearly unbearable. However, that is not why the boss is sending us there. Laborers clearing the overgrown track bed of a long-abandoned spur leading from the station came across something extraordinary: a derelict boxcar toppled over on its side; and further on, a cluster of crude tumbledown buildings. The foreman reported that the roadbed of the spur continued on far beyond the termination indicated in the 1879 survey. Deeper into the forest was a long ascending embankment leading to a deteriorating lattice truss bridge resting upon stone piers. It crossed a steep declivity in which flowed a meager creek. Six miles in, he had yet to reach the end of this forgotten spur. Before we go out for a look-see, my task is searching for records pertaining to this spur in the company archives. Prior to 1873, a sister company owned the entire southern division.

Our company began as a railroad from Port Unity to Orchard. It soon included Jacques Levesque's coastal steamboat line to allow the company to carry the Southern Great Mail. In 1846, a separate company formed to build a new railroad. Commencing on the bank of the river opposite Port Unity, its purpose was connecting to the railroads further south. For that reason, they build it in five-foot gauge. After a railroad bridge was constructed over the river in 1868-69, their line terminated in our upper yards at the joint companies' station. In 1878, the two railroads merged, and the new southern division was changed to standard gauge. What I discovered in the archives was a map of the original route of the southern line. The unfinished spur was once part of it. However, the 1854 map of the completed railroad shows the route following its present-day path. The chief engineer must have had a reason for altering the route. Our 1881 survey shows only three miles of track, and it is labeled "abandoned." The deed associated with this portion of the line refers to a "right-of-way commencing at Abbott's X-Roads and extending twelve miles to Fischer's Bluff. The latter is a fluvial formation not a town. Even though the surviving records of

the chief engineer do not specify why this spur was needed, I can only assume that the purpose was to establish access to river traffic.

Mr. Culver's crew cleared and graded a bumpy dirt road leading to his sawmill in the middle of a clearing six miles from Abbott's Town Station. Our company will restore the spur that far. Presently, our men are putting down ballast in anticipation of installing crossties and rails. They are also digging ditches. Several wagons bring dirt from a car to raise the track bed where needed. Once the track is down, the dirt cars are moved closer as the work progresses. Major Durant and I rode in the foreman's wagon to the end of construction. Wearing my boots, leather gloves, wool skirt, and winter coat proved to be a wise decision. It was cold and breezy. Expecting something remarkable, I brought along my box camera to document our discoveries. The whole excursion was a dirty one from start to finish. Not far from the end of construction, we came upon the abandoned boxcar and deteriorating shacks. Contrary to what we had been led to believe, the boxcar was not turned over. The wooden body on the car rotted and collapsed sideways. The carriage built of sturdy oak timbers remained attached to the single wheeled iron trucks. This was an incredibly old car! Most of the rolling stock built at Unity Terminal in the 1870s had four-wheel trucks. They were much longer, too. This car had a seat atop for a brakeman, so it predates the use of Westinghouse air brakes on our trains. The boxcar also had link and pin couplers. That it was abandoned at the end on the original spur suggests that somebody failed to set the brakes and chock the wheels, so the car rolled off the track. Why they left it was a mystery.

The cluster of shacks in the vicinity most likely was a camp for the men building the spur. The debris we found in the trash middens left near the structures include broken earthenware jugs, crushed tin cups, animal bones, and a few bent iron spikes (quite different from those used today). We even found a complete section of Evans "U" rail half-buried to the side of one shack. That would date back to the earliest days of this line, say, no later than 1850. About this time, our railroad was replacing our strap iron with "T" iron. Then came the hard part. (From this point forward was merely substructure. There wasn't any evidence that the builders put down ballast.) Ahead of us was a six mile trek over the cleared track bed to Fischer's Bluff. On reaching the bridge, the foreman recommended that we not cross it, so we turned back. Upon returning to the station, we waited for the train returning to Port Unity. Being extremely muddy, we chose to ride in the baggage car.

The next morning, I reported our findings to Mr. McNair. While waiting for my boys to develop the film, I found a map of the region in the archives based upon a survey of inland navigation in 1829. Fischer's Bluff was labeled a "wood stop," meaning a place where steamboats could take on firewood for their boilers. The docks along this proposed steamboat route were numbered, twelve in total covering a distance of ninety-six miles. It was time to telephone Dr. Willis.

The professor was in class until early afternoon, so he didn't return my call until half-past two. After a futile attempt to persuade me to enroll at the university – I wanted to go there! – he paged through his indices of the early *Messenger* and discovered an article about the Southwest River Steamboat Company. Though not indicated on the map, the scheme proposed a "horse drawn timber railway from Fischer's Bluff to the stagecoach stop at Abbott's Town on the post road. The latter is the colonial road leading from the causeway opposite Port Unity to the towns to the south and west. (The river's course bends northward approximately twenty miles south of this point.) The article also mentioned the installation of a stationary engine to lower firewood down a "rise"

to the steamboats. This is the same arrangement that existed at the earliest manifestation of our terminal. It appears that when our sister line was conceived, the chief engineer of their company located the route of their railroad parallel to the post road until it reached the bend in the river. There, he bridged it and continued south. His company acquired the right-of-way to build a spur to Fischer's Bluff, but like the steamboat company, it was never completed. Why? In 1859, construction of the lower trunk of the Central Line commenced. That brought about the end of the Southwest Steamboat Company.

Though we didn't walk to Fischer's Bluff, the foreman told us there was nothing there but a rotting dock. We should have pressed on to see for ourselves, but that wasn't practical. If Sam's projected agricultural community is successful, which Mr. McNair doubts in the long term, the company will extend the spur. Otherwise, where it stopped in the early 1850s will do for his sawmill. Good enough. *[If Myrna continues to do Mr. McNair's historical research, she might as well become the company historian. That Dr. Willis is encouraging her to study at the university is impressive. It is a shame that we must attend that college in the mountains. I am not looking forward to curtailing my ambitions to study the classics and learn how to draw. Even so, Uncle Roscoe said it's better to know a little bit about everything than be an expert in one thing without recognizing that it is connected to something else. If it weren't, we wouldn't be studying it. Goodness! I think my uncle and Myrna are competing for the most convoluted thought prize.]*

Reluctant company journalist

"Myrna, this voluminous document is the transcript of the official inquiry into the cause of the Great Fire of 1883. Have you read it?"

"Yes, my grandfather has a copy of it in his library. The results of the official inquiry could not determine whether it started on the *Beautiful Nancy* or in the storage yard of the turpentine distillery."

"Do you read the weekly publication we place in our stations' waiting rooms to keep patrons entertained while they have nothing better to do?"

"Of course, I always have nothing better to do. That's why devoting more time than most to studying various fascinating nonessential things comes second nature for me."

"Marvelous. Pretending that you are a journalist, interview Mr. McNair and Mr. Deschamps about the night of the fire. We'll run it in consecutive issues."

Mr. McNair's recollections

Edmund McNair, the Chief Engineer of the company, was happy to speak with me at length about his recollections of the Great Fire. However, before starting, he sent his assistant to the map room to retrieve the 1871 plan of the railroad district, and sundry drawings of buildings destroyed by the fire.

Most residents of Port Unity do not know about the earlier Great Fire in 1843. It was another windy day from the west, too. Nobody is sure how it started. It was Sunday, and every decent citizen was in church, but they said it started on the docks south of the steamboat landing. Most of the railroad district was still woods, but it destroyed the Methodist meeting house on North First Avenue, the sawmill on Mulberry Avenue, and some shanties on River Street. The flames made their way up the bluff, burned the old house, the railroad workshops, and the locomotive shed. It even destroyed the tracks in the station - they were strap iron on wooden rails. And that trestle leading down to the steamboats when up, too! The fire died out before

reaching Third Avenue. After that, they excavated, graded the old dry stream bed, and ran tracks down it to the river - that's the inclined plain. It was then a lot easier to load up freight from the steamboats and bring down wood for their boilers with the new track arrangement.

This was interesting history, and I recorded it dutifully in my notebook, but I was curious as to what relevance it had to the Great Fire of 1883. Then, it occurred to me that the earlier fire followed the same path.

My guess is that the topography channels wind coming off the river up the incline to Fifth Avenue. It's like a flue. In 1876, the railroad graded the land leading to the passenger station making the draft worse. Back then, the retaining wall ended at Third Avenue. It was a grassy mound from there on up. The fire climbed the embankment and came through the back yards of the houses on Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. The new bridge at Fourth Street gave way after its wooden deck caught fire. Before it collapsed, I saw cinders from the burning depot buildings blowing underneath it. The flames ran out of fuel beyond the bridge in the depot. The Methodists were unlucky again. Their beautiful church at Fourth and Rose went up. The fire brigade was able to stop the flames before they advanced to Sixth Street. There is another difference with the 1843 fire: Rose Street was not built up that far until after it; the same for Mulberry. It was sandy scrub. The nice houses on First Avenue were not built until after that fire. When the 1883 fire cleared them away, the street was rebuilt commercial. The fire was much worse for many reasons, but how it caught comes down to a few things: the yard of the turpentine distillery had hundreds of barrels of product stored out in the open; the nearby cotton warehouses, all wooden construction, were fitted with lantern roofs with open windows; and the steamboat *Beautiful Nancy* crashed into the old wooden schooner tied up at the end of the wharves.

It was around half past ten when I heard a commotion outside my house and went to investigate. At the time, I lived at 805 Mulberry. Upon opening the front door, I saw the western sky lit up. There was an acrid smell in the air, and it was quite windy, too. All the barrels of turpentine were afire. Several of my neighbors, who were out on the sidewalk gawking, told me that the flames appeared on the horizon earlier. I set out on foot to see for myself. Reaching Fourth Street, I continued north a block to the bridge, and walked out on to it. From there, the scene was clear. Our warehouses on the river caught. Yard engines shunted long strings of cars through the cut to the upper yards. At the station, passenger cars were being readied for the move, and all the locomotives, whether on their own power or being towed, formed a line on track seven. Even from that distance, I heard the shouting! Quickly, I ran across the bridge, and climbed down the embankment on the north side, continued along the track the distance of a block to the passenger car shop. There, I encountered the night foreman and his men loading tools inside a baggage car. He told me that the fire started at the turpentine distillery and spread to our warehouse and the cotton warehouses south. All the vessels tied up at our wharves cast off and headed for the docks on the other side of the river. The men who worked the day shift, many living in homes north of the depot, came to help. Mr. Levesque gave the order to evacuate the lower yards and station about a half-hour after the distillery went up. At the time, neither one of us knew the fire might have started on a steamboat. Regardless, both of us found all the barrels stored out on the docks worrisome. If you are looking for a reason why the fire got out of hand, look no further. The freight office

on River Street went up after our warehouses and the company store. Our men then abandoned the lower yards at the wharves. No more cars were brought up through the inclined plane. The fire advanced on the west side of First Avenue before the station. The Episcopal Church on the east side of the street followed. All those beautiful old houses! The home of the old superintendent went up, too!

The station was safe until after midnight. By that time, most of the rolling stock and all of our locomotives were safe in the upper yards. Mr. Levesque, along with Mr. Deschamps, the telegraphers, and I established our headquarters in the joint company station where the tracks cross Tenth Street. We ate and slept there for three days! All local traffic was routed to Haynes Town Station; and later, to the old yard at Tenth Street when we moved our locomotives to Northeast Depot, thirteen miles away. Through traffic took the arc that bypasses Unity Depot. We move the mechanics from our shops to Wayne City and Orchard depots. After a month of round-the-clock labor, the debris from the fire was cleared, loaded into dirt trains, and used as fill to extend the company wharves out into the river. As for the burnt district in town, I didn't have a chance to tour it until the ruins were demolished, and the debris carted away. The board of directors of the company, in a brilliant move, purchased the entire block where the turpentine distillery once stood, and all but a corner lot on the block bounded by First, Rose, Mulberry, and River. It became the site of corporate headquarters. The east side of First, once occupied by the Episcopal Church, became commercial, the Railroad Hotel taking up most of it, except for Captain Hall's lot at the intersection with Mulberry. The cotton compress and warehouse moved to Second Street, and the ice company built that gigantic cold storage building at Second and Rose. Houses filled in the vacant lots up to Third Avenue. Part of Unity Station is built on the site of the old superintendent's house. It stood three stories and had a spacious basement.

Mr. Deschamps' recollections

Mr. Deschamps, Master of Transportation, was also happy to entertain my request for an interview. Like my grandfather and Mr. McNair, he was not at the depot when the fire on the *Beautiful Nancy* started. Visiting friends nearby, he was able to arrive at the station earlier.

My office was in the former Patterson residence at 303 North First Avenue, presently the location the firm of Fowler & Lynch. The latter leveled the old two-story brick home to build their office building. Once North First Avenue was lined with the homes of many wealthy families, but by the early 1880s, most moved further out to less busy environs as Commerce Street was extended. Not one of the houses build on North First in the 1850s stands today, nor is Commerce Street that commercial beyond Third Avenue. To get an idea what the railroad district was like prior to the arrival of the merchants and lawyers, take a stroll down South First Avenue beyond the shops within two blocks of Commerce. Most of those grand old homes date to the 1840s and '50s, and a few, back to the 1700s. Forgive me, I have strayed off the topic. Our company purchased the Patterson House to serve as corporate offices in 1878 due to a lack of space in the old station. Business picked up after we put down several branch lines and entered into the joint agreement with the Central. The move to 303 North First was fortunate. The corporate records were safe from the conflagration that destroyed the entire station. Only the records in the freight office were lost; yet, not entirely, because the accounting department was in the former servants' quarters of the Patterson House. On the

afternoon of November 21, 1883, I left my office at six o'clock, and proceeded on foot to my home, then, a block east at two hundred Walnut - regrettably demolished in 1902 to build Merchants Bank. I dressed for dinner, and then walked half a block to Dr. Lawson's house, 153 Walnut. That was at seven o'clock. After dinner, Mrs. Lawson played the piano for an hour, and then the doctor and I retired to his library for coffee and a cigar. We discussed politics until nine. During the afternoon, it was windy, but when I stepped out on the porch to head home, it was a gale. My hat blew off, and I had to chase it down in the Lawson's front yard. During this time, I smelled the smoke. It was the exact odor of burning old wood. Immediately, I thought it might be a house fire. The heavy wind thinned and dispersed it throughout the district. You could not tell where it was coming from; however, it was pervasive. I set out to investigate. Upon reaching North First, I saw by gaslight fingers of smoke passing between the houses closest to the station. A few of the residents gathered in the street, including the Episcopal vicar and his wife. By the time I reached them, flames blazed up from behind the houses on the west side of the block. That was when the turpentine barrels ignited. At that time, it was apparent the danger was great. The vicar asked me what to do. I told him to gather up his records, church things, and so forth, and then make for safety. He made it out before the steeple came crashing down after the fire consumed the houses on the opposite side of the street. That was a beautiful church - such a loss! When I arrived at the station, I telegraphed to Northeast Depot to stop all southbound trains there. Northbound traffic was diverted through the upper yards. Fortunately, at a quarter of ten, all passenger traffic in Unity Station was done for the day. The next train arriving was at six in the morning. I dispatched the regular freight trains that were made up to Haynes Town and Northeast when the through northbound line was clear. I ordered the pilot at our wharves to instruct the captains aboard their vessels to cast off whether they were under steam or not. All made it out into the river without crashing into each other. Getting the locomotives clear took every minute that remained. We had two yard engines brought up from the lower yards and one in the upper yards moving our passenger engines from the roundhouse. The freight engines were ready for their night runs. Superintendent Levesque joined me around the time the oil house behind the station caught fire. We evacuated the station and walked to the old depot in the upper yards.

The report published by the official inquiry stated the crew of the *Beautiful Nancy* discovered the fire at five minutes after nine. The boat docked at fifteen after four. All seven passengers disembarked before five o'clock; and the captain went ashore at six, leaving the first mate in charge. Oh, one more thing: before leaving, a gentleman passenger gave the stokers tending the boiler two bottles of whiskey before descending the gangplank. They didn't start drinking it until after the boiler was cold, and they were off duty around seven. When the fire was discovered, the first mate ordered the ship cut loose and he attempted to steer it out into the river; but without power, the bow wedged between the schooner *Coastal Zephyr* and our wharf. The crew of the schooner cast off in an attempt to drift away from the burning *Beautiful Nancy*. It drifted into the 'T' shaped deep-water pier of the turpentine distillery. The old map Mr. McNair showed me placed the end of that pier forty feet out in the river. How did the flames from there arrive at the yard behind the distillery, setting the barrels ablaze, say, three-quarters of an hour after the blaze was discovered?

The station had a clock tower, and unlike folks' watches, it's synchronized daily. You cannot run a railroad without accurate timekeeping. The fire was well underway when I arrived. I am assuming that the wind caught embers, or a fragment of canvas from the schooner's sail... but,

I smelled smoke at close to nine o'clock. The chronology doesn't seem right to me. Is it plausible that the fire was discovered by the crew at eight o'clock? Most definitely, but the first mate on the *Beautiful Nancy* and the captain of the schooner *Coastal Zephyr*, in their statements, said the fire on the stern of the steamboat was discovered at five after nine. That appeared to the captain of the schooner like a bonfire. In fact, they sounded the alarm, not the crew of the *Beautiful Nancy*. Apparently, the latter had nobody on watch. Nevertheless, when the northwest wind encounters the bluff there are always some disruptions of the flow, turbulent movements, and uplift. The commission considered this in their inquiry. An ember from the turpentine yard could have been carried aloft and drift down to the deck of the *Beautiful Nancy*. That's why blame for the fire could not be pinned on the distillery nor the company that owned the steamboat.

As I stated earlier, we suspect that the wind blew some embers over the six-foot fence of the turpentine yard. That is, if the fire started on the *Beautiful Nancy*. As I recall, the distillery had several shiploads of barrels on hand any day. I also imagine that the ground was saturated with turpentine after decades. From the time before the railroad, there was always naval stores produced and stored on that lot. Though the rear of corporate headquarters now occupies the spot, you need only to dig down a foot below the lawn to encounter the smell of tar and pitch. Even without the *Beautiful Nancy* catching fire, an incendiary tossing a match over the fence would have produced the same results. The distillery was the source of constant worry for the company, but it was a moneymaker. We had a track running there. From the time the road started, everybody along the line boxing the longleaf sent the sap here. It was a dependable source of revenue. At one time, there were three distilleries making turpentine. Now, there is hardly a call for naval stores. Wooden ships are a thing you rarely see.

Maybe an incendiary started the fire on the *Beautiful Nancy*, the turpentine yard, or both. The official inquiry did not pursue that possibility, though it was discussed. Nobody witnessed such an act, and there was no evidence to support the claim. Furthermore, they didn't have a suspect. The residents of the railroad district lived with the constant manufacturing of flammable liquids in quantity for forty years without incident. The owner didn't think it was necessary to hire a watchman! Some find the possibility of a criminal cause underlying this catastrophe intriguing, but the official inquiry ruled it out. Though... something still bothers me: the passenger who gave the crewmen bottles of liquor. Who was he? None of the crew recalled his name. The *Beautiful Nancy* was carrying farm pressed bales of cotton. That reminds me of that scene in a novel where a boy flicks a lit match overboard and it drops into a cow hole on a bale. The whole riverboat went up in flames because of it. With the *Beautiful Nancy*, it could have smoldered for hours and the crew in their cups would have never noticed a fire until it got out of hand. Earlier that year, very strange things happened. A drifter shot our old superintendent, and somebody – I forget who it was – shot the fellow while he was making his escape. The dead man didn't have so much as a scrap of paper on his person! During the spring, somebody sabotaged the trestle at Panther Creek, but the engineer spotted the missing rails in time to stop his train; and Spring Garden Station was deliberately set afire. Somebody had a grudge against the railroad. The Major's daddy thought it went back to an incident that occurred almost two decades earlier. Richard Durant, Sr. said it occurred near Elm Grove Station in 1865 but he was reluctant to reveal the particulars.

I prepared both articles for the publication excluding Mr. Deschamps' speculation about sabotage. Even so, my curiosity about William Byrd, the former superintendent who met a violent end, prompted me to dig myself into another hole. Granddaddy James told me that the Board of Directors appointed him Mr. Byrd's assistant in 1876 after having worked as a civil engineer in charge of completing the Central Line's western division. He was only twenty-five years old. The grading of the passenger yard was finished by the time he assumed his position, and the station in the upper yards had been in use for five years. He lived at 811 Rose with his family, a short walk from work. For several years, the company manufactured cars in what is now the passenger yard. This was discontinued in 1878, and the company saw fit to construct a large station made of wood on the site where the original station stood before 1843. The reason being was that the end of North First was more convenient for travelers and merchants. Superintendent Byrd lived in an ornate three story Italianate house on the northeast corner of North First and Rose. It was built in 1847, and was originally owned by the banker Jules LeQuire, my grandmother's great grandfather. When completed, the *Messenger* published an article on this magnificent home. For a while, it was considered the most opulent in the city. After his death in 1856, his heirs put it on the market. William Byrd purchased it in 1858. Abutting the inclined plane, the smoke and noise at all times of day made the home less attractive to buyers than the heirs anticipated. It sold for two-thirds of the price they were asking earlier. After the fire, an attorney representing Byrd's widow sold the lot to the company for two hundred dollars.

Hearing all these details about Byrd's house was interesting but I wanted to know about the man. What about this incident that occurred in 1865? According to Granddaddy James, Superintendent Byrd was saving the locomotives, rolling stock, and equipment from Orchard Depot in advance of Union troops taking the town. At this point, he was putting the interests of the company first. At Elm Grove Station, the lead train was stopped by Musslewhite's Raiders, free-roaming Confederate horse soldiers who had already set fire to rolling stock after pillaging the provisions they contained, and damaged two locomotives. Their leader, Captain Oliver Musslewhite confronted Superintendent Byrd, and commanded him to remove his men from the train. He was under orders to set the train on fire so it wouldn't fall into enemy hands. Byrd said, "Tell your commanding officer to go straight to hell. Better yet, have him meet you there." Musslewhite when for his revolver. The superintendent, a veteran of the Mexican War, was faster. He put a ball between Musslewhite's eyes. His second in command reached for his pistol but Richard Durant Sr. shot him in the upper arm with his rifle. The rest of the horsemen retreated with their new commander. If the fellow didn't die, he certainly lost the arm. In those days, a ball from a black powder rifle could shatter bones. North of Wayne City, Union troops intercepted the trains. This time, Superintendent Byrd surrendered without a fight. In a few days, the war was over. After the sabotaging of company property and the death of Mr. Byrd in early 1883, a rumor circulated amongst railroad men that a gang of five ruffians led by a one-armed man was behind the crimes. It was something Nester Horne would have written about had he known about the incident. The official record has Oliver Musslewhite dying in a skirmish with Union scouts, so it remain that way. Granddaddy James heard the full story from Richard Durant, Sr. before his death in 1903. By this time, Dick Browning was making mischief and the railroad men were chattering about Demon Pete. The company accepted Sheriff Depree's original conclusion that Superintendent Byrd was shot by a drifter who was attempting to rob him. I couldn't include any of this in my articles so that was it. Good enough!

A final note on the fire: Granddaddy James was interim superintendent for several years before the Board of Directors appointed him to the vacant position. By this time, he had overseen the

building of a new machine shop and roundhouse, and the first office building at corporate headquarters had been completed. The company wharves were rebuilt a month after the fire and the lower yards was serviceable again. Overall, the terminal continued to function through the rebuilding reviving its disused facilities in the upper yards. Even so, building of new Unity Station did not commence until 1910 though the plans were completed in 1895. Today, it is mostly finished.

My interviews with Mr. McNair and Mr. Deschamps were published in one issue of the company magazine entitled *Station Stop*. Mr. Hennessy thought it funny to include “Article by ‘The Girl,’ staff reporter” under “Remembering the Great Fire” – ha-ha-ha!

Still a journalist

I had to write a second article for the company’s throw-away publication. This time, it was on our discovery of *The Haynes Diary* inside the lock box. Having transcribed it, I selected some of the best entries and redrew the sketch of Joseph Haynes’ house plan. I also included photographs of the key to the Haynes family tomb, the lockbox, and Mr. Garington’s restored Bramah lock. I used John Chubb’s 1850 treatise *On the Construction of Locks and Keys* to describe how it worked. It turned out to be a rather nice piece of journalism. Somehow, both numbers of *Station Stop* found their way onto the desk of Mr. Arnold Benson, the editor of the *Messenger*. Mr. Hennessy allowed him to republish them in the Sunday morning edition two weeks apart. He added a footnote: “The railroad employee known by her colleagues as ‘The Girl’ rescued aviator Cornelius Ashcraft from his crashed flying machine last summer.” The fellows in the Engineering Department and the station officers congratulated me on my accomplishments. I bake plenty of my special pecan delights for them in appreciation.

Unfinished business

Liz is a frequent visitor to my basement workshop after work, and occasionally Ella sets aside jealousy of her rival to “loungue about and chatter as ladies are so inclined.” A discussion between these two resembles attorneys presenting their opening arguments, erudite and formal. The amusing part is they are slouching in battered armchairs half-dressed sipping tea and sharing a tin of sardines. It’s somewhat warm down here due to the boiler, but it’s not hot, and it is freezing outside. Goodness! Those two would trudge through the snow in their nightgowns and think nothing of it.

The topics of the day include determining whether the bones of the murdered man found on the Haynes Plantation on the Northeast River belong to Pete Bresnahan, and how should Sheriff Smallwood proceed in the case of the missing railroad men. Though Mr. Hennessy is satisfied with our work on his “special inquiry,” we are determined ladies who cannot let go of mysteries until we drive ourselves insane or take on another mystery. Liz noted that the bullet that passed through the skull of the victim that might be Bresnahan wasn’t found. That suggests that the coroner’s crew didn’t look hard enough, or the man was shot somewhere other than near the grave. The site is too large to search, but the villain likely dispatched his victim nearby. The only advantage of burying him in the Haynes family plot was the company of generations planted in untended ground masking his presence. In time, the fresh grave would be grown over like the rest. Nobody back then could imagine anybody exhuming the bones of this extinct line for any reason. Even if somebody did, who could say he wasn’t a Haynes man who met with misfortune? I retrieved my

notebook and the topographic map of Northeast Township from upstairs. Upon returning, I joined the discussion.

“Nester Horne interviewed a gentleman on the North Side, likely our ‘son of a beekeeper’ Richard Peterson. He told Horne that the young man who picked up his buckboard and mule said the relatives of the dishonored lady intended to whip the scoundrel. When he returned the wagon, he smelled of pine smoke and liquor. Extralegal punishment involving personal affronts are perpetrated away from public view. The abandoned Haynes Plantation fit the bill. An offending party is tied to a tree and then whipped by one or more individuals representing the offended. That the boy smelled of pine smoke in liquor, referring to the deed as a ‘party,’ suggests the participants build a fire and drank during the proceedings. This survey was made in 1896. Here is the old plantation house, likely still standing. It is built in the shape of the letter ‘L,’ and there is the kitchen building, privies, and over here is the burying ground. Though this happened twenty-four years ago, we are looking for liquor bottles, unused or scorched pine firewood, ashes, discarded rope, and a suitable tree for the whipping close to the fire and not far from the burying ground. Since the shot was point blank and passed through the skull, the bullet is probably lodged in the tree. My sister has a deputy friend named Chester Wilkes. What say we have her have him take a look-see?” Ella frowned. Liz gave her a disingenuous smile.

“So, Ella, why not do that? My daddy doesn’t want us involved with this investigation. If your Deputy Wilkes finds that bullet, we’ll have a friend to call upon down the road. Is he handsome?” Ella nodded. “Excellent! I’m not surprised that Myrna has been thinking about this problem. Her mind never stops taking things apart. What perturbs me is how quickly Sheriff Smallwood dropped the case.” Ella came to his defense.

“All his likely suspects are dead. The sheriff has many current cases; his deputies are spread thin protecting a vast area. It is understandable why he considers these unsolved cases from the past a time-consuming drain.”

“True, but the county is in possession of remains that must be identified. The relatives of the man might want to give them a proper burial. That aside, solving a case that has garnered public interest for a generation can only enhance the reputation of his department. He’s up for reelection next year.” Ella grumbled.

“I’ll do it. What about this Deputy Benard?”

“Nothing. His whereabouts are unknown. What we learned from Wright and Newsome isn’t useful unless an eyewitness comes forward to substantiate their recollections of what Zack Colton saw. There’s no proof that the incident at ‘The Ranch’ took place. That the crime was never reported and there wasn’t a body is a greater obstacle to overcome.”

“If there were a body, connecting it to Benard is the next problem.”

I was struck by how the strength of our findings were no better than investigating claims that Benard destroyed crops through witchcraft. There are more holes in our assumptions: Colton had been drinking; it was dark; just because Benard fired his revolver doesn’t mean his bullet hit its mark or was meant to cause injury; the accusations against him are transmitted second-hand; and after many years of concealing their secret, Wright and Newsome could have unwittingly come to a consensus on misremembered details.

The same problem emerges from the darkness over and again: by our nature, we want certainty, yet the past grows stale the instant it becomes the past, and it diminishes in clarity until it dissolves into irrelevance. Is the past merely another bogeyman? I am afraid so. Once a building is torn down, it’s gone. The view from the third story balcony, the creaky staircase, the smell of

old wood permeating the lobby: all this and more only exists in the minds of those who experienced being there. You can rebuild the building using the original plans, but it will not be the same. Past and future are in our minds. We cannot go back in time physically because nothing is there; the future is subject to a multitude of chance interactions between natural phenomena and the choices of individuals, so there are countless possible futures – prognostication is no better than guessing. History is merely a representation of the past cobbled together from fragments that somebody saw fit to preserve, its accuracy is relative to scale and context. One can imagine a seeming insignificant occurrence in the present might change how a future present evaluates the past, which is for us merely the future. Goodness!

After Ella spoke with Deputy Wilkes, he went out to the old Haynes plantation with Mr. Purcell, an assistant from Coroner Cordell's office. As I expected they found a bullet lodged in an ancient tree near the tumbledown plantation house, the position and angle appeared to match what one might expect if the shot passed through the head of an average size man. The .36 caliber ball was likely fired at close range from a Navy revolver manufactured in the early 1850s. He also found fragments of rotten rope, liquor bottles, and a mound of ashes including the ends of partially burnt pine branches. So, the revolver was obsolete when it was used on the victim. A round would consist of ball and black powder in a paper cartridge ignited by a percussion cap. This only brings us a step further. As with the case of the missing railroad men, we understand more about the crime and have nothing leading to the culprits. Ella remarked that the antique revolver dated from the era of the last of the Haynes remains in the burying ground. That could present another problem since the 1880s belt buckle and other artifacts were found loose inside the grave.

Improvements

Mr. McNair told me that work will begin this fall on an expansion of the station police office. It will include additional rooms and storage. That's all I know thus far. I recommended replacing that hard oak bench. He told me that all the furniture will be replaced, and there will be new light fixtures.

Of all my assortment of odd assignments since last summer, I enjoyed writing articles for the *Station Stop*.

The War

Recently, we were shocked to hear news of the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania* by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The loss of life exceeded a thousand with over a hundred of these being American citizens. Many thought this outrageous act might draw us into the conflict. Fortunately, all parties backed away from the brink.

Off to college

Uncle Roscoe explained why Superintendent Levesque decided to enroll me in college along with Myrna. Being the more "genteel" of his two presumptive corporate matriarchs, he expected that I was more apt to take the polishing quicker than her. [Très drôle!] Besides that, my training and "protective nature" was a sure safeguard against Myrna falling in with the wrong sort – at an exclusive college for ladies. [Especially "the tea-partiers" who "lounge about and chatter as ladies are so inclined." Goodness!] After a brief holiday that includes visits to a few museums, our

journey to the “cold storage locker” commences. [Right, despite having a dandy state university twelve blocks away. Drats!]

CHAPTER FIVE

1916

Hello, Ladies; it's me: Myrna Eloise Levesque, that very tall, bespectacled, eccentric, brown-eyed brunette who does not have a pet alligator. Do you remember what we call our secluded college in the mountains? No? It's "*Château de Glace*, the cold storage locker for young ladies." Uh-huh, Ella and I spent an entire academic year couped up in the citadel high atop Mount Rienici – ha-ha-ha! No holiday, no months spent learning the family business from the gentlemen who complicate our lives, no handsome fellows to pester; goodness, we had little choice but resort to studying! With unwavering resolve, we braved the travails of academic busyness and frostbite for nine months, successfully completing the first-year program of study with acceptable marks. Hurrah! So, how well did we do? Let's ask Ella.

Myrna was good in mathematics class; I barely passed. She received the best grades in physics; I passed. As expected, she excelled in drawing; my grade improved after volunteering to pose. Surprisingly, Myrna struggled with French! I helped her study for the examination nights on end but the girl who could remember a whole script after a few readings struggled with the tongue of our ancestors. I had little trouble with it! My Uncle Roscoe labors under the misguided notion that a true Levesque girl needs to be fluent enough to impress, not thinking that hurling furtive insults in public is more entertaining. That aside, Myrna must translate the taunting annotations I add to our journal." [Ella is a *méchante fille*! Ha-ha-ha!]

Hereafter, our subsequent entries proceed in chronological order. They are a record of events written in the proximate time of their occurrence. [It is a suitable way to document what we're doing when we're not sure of the consequences.]

The ghost

Before leaving, I received a letter from Major Durant describing the latest news from home. The most perplexing problem at Unity Terminal at this time is the periodic intrusions by a daring woman trespasser that the watchmen dubbed the "ghost." She wears a white blouse and visits posted areas at twilight. Nobody has come close enough to see her face. Recently, the lower yards patrol chased her, but she inexplicably escaped after leaping across the tracks in front of an oncoming freight train. This occurred in the excavated incline leading to the freight yards at the company wharves. Towering stone retaining walls flank the tracks on both sides. How she managed to escape from the five-officer patrol had the Major puzzled. Myrna was determined to figure out how she accomplished the feat.

On the train home, I attempted to visualize the escape of the "ghost" trespasser in my sketchbook, mostly diagrams but in occasional flights of imagination my analysis included depictions of the action in scenes. Ah-ha, this is Doktor Blister's lady friend the saboteur *Fräulein Geisterdame*! I just made her up. Leaping across the tracks sounds like an exaggeration. I have the officers chasing her in the direction of the oncoming freight train and she crosses in front of it just in time. Ascending the inclined plane from the lower yards, the locomotive had yet to gain much speed. Our fellows continued down the incline whereas she turned directions and ran alongside the train, making her escape up the embankment at the Sixth Street Bridge. Though Major Durant's letter was short on details I determined that this maneuver best fit the situation. Ella offered her analysis of my diagrams and together we agreed upon a strategy for taking the lady by surprise

without trying to chase her. Having beat some of the officers in a footrace two summers ago I can attest to the difficulty of outrunning them. She must be quite athletic.

Port Unity

Major Durant was standing on the platform ready to welcome us home when our train pulled into Unity Station. Briefly, I described how the “ghost” made her recent escape, and then volunteer to walk it through with Sergeant Quince and his patrol. They are my favorites. Ella bolstered her strategy for apprehending this acrobat by referencing the diagrams sketched in my drawing pad. Since neither one of us knew the entire story, the Major was amazed at how accurately we extrapolated details of the incident from his letter. The solution: blocking the lady’s way out of the terminal at Sixth Street was the best way to accomplish a capture without trying to chase her down. He asked me to stop by the station police office Saturday afternoon. No trains ran through the inclined plane until early evening, so he thought a walk-through might be a productive exercise. Additionally, the Major said he would fill out my pass and send it to Chief Inspector Hennessy, and there was more news.

“Mr. Hennessy plans to hire three women station officers in the fall and another three next year. Miss Buchanan will supervise them. Ella’s assignment for this summer is to set up their headquarters in the station police office. When Mr. McNair can spare Myrna, she will assist you, maintain our records, and continue her training with Captain Johnston. Nevertheless, Mr. Hennessy has the final say with her assignments. A seamstress will measure you for new uniforms. Other than being of a higher quality material suitable to our climate the design remains the same. Yes, Myrna, the same number of pockets. That said, Superintendent Levesque has been looking forward to having his girls back for the summer. Mrs. Keane is driving him up a tree with her dietary rules: no fried chicken, no chocolate cake, no sweet tea, and definitely no ice cream. He put down his foot when she went after his scotch.” Uh-huh, her tyranny knows no bounds! If I’m not mistaken, we are now the ladies of the house. Well, after she leaves for the day, hmm, providing the kitchen remains immaculate after our handywork. Drats.

Back home! The house is enormous! Our favorite place is the third floor. In one large room, there is a scale model of the entire terminal as conceived by Mr. McNair in 1905. The adjoining room contains a drafting table, map cabinets, and shelves of files; a third room is the repository of the family papers and artifacts; unfurnished rooms and the staircase leading up to the belvedere constitutes the remainder. In the latter, Mr. Levesque observed the rebuilding of the terminal through his powerful telescope. Myrna and I loved this floor because we have it to ourselves most of the time.

Sergeant Quince

Granddaddy James was at corporate headquarters; Ella was napping, while the irascible Mrs. Keane haggled with the produce man on the front steps: the way was clear for me to slip around the corner to the Sixth Street Bridge to make some sketches. If I tarried there long, the dashing Sergeant Quince might happen by for a brief chat, providing that I stayed on the bridge. Stealthily, I made my way down the stairs, through the dining room, the kitchen, the pantry, the laundry room, and out the back door. The short path to the bridge was through the side gate opening onto Sixth Street. From there, it is a half-block. Viewing the interior of the inclined plane from a suitable vantage point was first on my mind. The walkway on the bridge sufficed. There, I was “safe” because it is part of the public way. That ended on the other side: posted railroad property. For a

while, I gazed into the expansive excavation. Here, the north track splits. The south track split at the Fourth Street Bridge. So, the inclined grows wider. Narrow dirt roadways on both sides paralleled the array of tracks. I found the temptation to dash through it overwhelming! Why not? Doing so might be problematic if the officers happen to be patrolling. I didn't have a pass. After about fifteen minutes of sketching, a voice from behind stirred me from my daydreaming.

"Good afternoon, Miss Levesque?" Oh, it was Sergeant Phillip Quince! I was all smiles. "Back for the summer?"

"Yes, sir; Mr. Hennessy is sending me to Mr. McNair's office to help with drafting for a few weeks; and after that, I'm not sure."

"The Major said that your sister is working with us."

"Yes, the whole summer."

"Where do you want to be?"

"I was thinking about the locomotive shops but anything out-of-doors is for me, too. If you have a minute, tell me about the 'ghost' trespasser who caused all the commotion."

"Sunday evening last, Sergeant Frier's men spotted the lady walking in the inclined plane near this bridge. They called out, she took off, and then they gave chase. Their plan was to apprehend her between Fifth and Fourth. The retaining walls are so high that she could only continue to the lower yards. A freight train was beginning its ascent; so regardless of which side of it she took, the cars of the freight would either channel her path behind the retaining wall of the machine shop or place her in the maze of cars occupying the lower yards. Eventually, the men would corner her. Midway between the bridges at Fourth and Fifth, the lady made a daring maneuver: an acrobatic leap across the tracks barely clearing the locomotive. The men dared not attempt it! Had they decided to split into two groups on opposite sides of the approaching freight, I doubt the effectiveness of such a stunt. Some of them raced ahead, and the rest waited for the train to pass. She was gone! They searched the lower yards, the only place the lady could have escaped. Not there! What do you think?"

"Easy: just turn directions and run alongside the locomotive. On reaching this bridge, she dashed up that sloped embankment, and then escaped into town. That's how I'd do it. Here, I can show you right now." I grinned.

"Ah-ha, you're putting me to the test. Alright, did the Major give you a pass to enter posted areas?"

"Mr. Hennessy has one for me. I haven't been home long enough to pick it up, nor do I have my company papers."

"That's not good enough, ma'am: you must carry something on your person; or else, I have to take you into custody. Since you're a company employee, we can't file trespassing charges; writing up a report and escorting you off railroad property is all."

"I know that must be disappointing."

"Believe me, running you off makes more sense; but we can't do that for anybody except the neighborhood urchins under sixteen. The rest are supposed to know better. Chief Inspector Hennessy wrote the procedural manual, so I know you understand. He's your boss."

"Congratulations! You passed. Aside from studying the manual, I learned first-hand, twice, in fact: the first time, I forgot my papers and pass; the second, they fell out of the envelope. Spending a delightful hour in the company of handsome gentlemen usually doesn't involve handcuffs but I'm not picky – ha-ha-ha! Take a look at these diagrams and drawings. This is the ideal spot to see a strategy unfold in your mind's eye. She can outrun the men, so it is a matter of closing in and cornering her between Fifth Street and the Fourth Street Bridge where the retaining walls are high.

The officers need to stay on the south side roadway, blocking her escape up this embankment. From what you told me, they were trying to chase her down on the terminal side of the inclined plane. No escape there: the upper reaches of the passenger yard are dangerous; and continuing up the incline plane, the ‘ghost’ risks running into the upper yards patrol. Whereas on the opposite side, she can escape here, or at Seventh Street. At the latter, the level of the inclined plane is a mere few feet below where the street ends.”

“Remarkable! It’s like you witnessed her escape while standing here. No doubt about it: you’re a real artist! I imagine you could draw up illustrations for a whole adventure story.”

“Yes, sir; but it needs a better plot. Five officers trying to capture a lunatic carnival acrobat isn’t dramatic. I must start by giving the ‘ghost’ lady an intriguing name, say, Fräulein Geisterdame. That’s the perfect name for my villainess! Everything sounds dangerous in German. So, Fräulein Geisterdame is intent upon planting a powerful *Eisenbahn Obstkuchen* in the switching tower. Sergeant Quince and his valiant patrolmen are determined to catch her this time. Hurrah, gentlemen! Can they catch the cunning vixen before the arrival of the evening express? I suppose so; if not, our story continues in the next episode. I’m excited!”

“I’m looking forward to reading it. Oh, before I go, let me remind you about not going down there without your pass.” Here it comes! “The Major describes you as ‘a good-natured gal unperturbed by slight inconveniences’ but our Fräulein Glisten-geyser happens to be about your height, which is exceptional, and the officers, of which some have never met you, are anxious to capture the ‘cunning vixen’ trespasser who makes our department a laughingstock. Do not make unauthorized visits to the terminal after dark and carry your pass when Mr. McNair sends you out to make drawings. If we happen to bring you in when it’s busy, you’ll sit on the bench handcuffed until we can work on the report. The Major said we put the *bona fide* business of the office ahead of escorting that ‘overly high-spirited absent-minded young lady’ home to ‘her terrible highness’ Mrs. Keane. Nobody wants to tangle with her!”

“Don’t worry about that. The Major filled out a pass for me; and in addition, said we can do a walk-through of these diagrams Saturday afternoon when there is no traffic through the inclined plane. Until then, you can keep my sketchbook. Do you like ‘overly high-spirited’ girls?”

“I can think of one, but there are two fellows who like her, too, Billy Hubbard and Albert McComber. No doubt she has a string of beaux. Don’t forget your pass.”

Of the station officers, Sergeant Phillip Quince is my latest favorite. I am impressed that he advanced so rapidly to the leadership of a patrol! He is personable and witty; and unlike most gentlemen of average stature, doesn’t mind socializing with a bespectacled amazon who is a few inches taller.

My bedroom is situated on the northwest side of the second floor facing the passenger yard, but about one hundred feet beyond our rear brick wall is the inclined plane. Between two and five in the morning, freight trains depart and arrive in the lower yards, all passing through it. Having grown up with this eventide din (rumbling, screeching, bangs, and whistles), I did not expect spending nine months away in the mountains would change my ingrained insensitivity to racket. Our first night back, I startled awake, wide eyed and upright, as if a thunderclap broke above. It was merely a whistle of a freight train. Making things worse, I left the window open. As the freight passed below, coal smoke wafted into my room. At some point that night, I slept but the arrival of the overnight express roused me. Ella decided to move to the upstairs parlor and sprawl out on the *chaise lounge*. Granddaddy James thought it was funny. I dressed in my uncomfortable company issued attire, had breakfast, and arrived at Mr. Hennessy’s office pretending to be alert. Surprise!

A seamstress from Bland's Dress Shop was there to measure us for new uniforms. Bland's Dress Shop! He wasn't pinching pennies. Granddaddy James sends me to Gilford's department store for clothes because of my tomboy proclivities. My favorite is a dark pull-over cotton dress with buttons in the front and an open collar. It is very plain, but comfortable, good for running! After the seamstress measured me, I received my new assignment from Mr. Hennessy.

"Welcome back, Myrna. Mr. McNair intends to make some improvements on the south side of the inclined plane: clearing the undergrowth, grading, and a roadway paved with brick. His plans also include sections of wrought iron fence between the bridges to prevent reckless trespassers from toppling twenty feet down to the tracks. Once complete, the next task is replacing the ancient stone retaining walls with ones of reenforced concrete. For the time being, he wants to conduct a survey of sorts aimed at identifying all the ruins and abandoned structures in that section of terminal property, above ground and buried. No drawings survive from the original buildings, only vague descriptions in the stockholders reports and newspaper articles."

"Sir, the ruins of the burnt-out paint shop on the north side of the terminal are an ideal hiding place for the 'ghost lady' trespasser. The rolling stock parked on the track running between the passenger car shop and upper yards offers a blind to any movement in the area and there is a dirt path that passes behind the ruins leading to an opening in the fence."

"Were you off exploring on your own?"

"Not lately, sir; I just arrived." He took a sealed envelope from his desk and handed it to me.

"Perchance you decide to venture into the area on your own to make drawings for Mr. McNair, here are your passes from Major Durant. Don't forget them." Here we go. "Last summer the station police arrested you for trespassing again. If I send you out to see whether the officers are doing their job remember to bring along your employee papers unless you don't mind them taking you into custody. That's good practice for them. However, I'm hoping you will communicate your intentions in advance to Captain Johnston so we might avert future clashes between Mrs. Keane and Major Durant. Their latest scrap concerned the height of the officer who the captain assigned the task of escorting you off company property."

"No matter: Officer McComber brought me home a half hour earlier for dinner. She accused me of fraternizing with the poor fellow."

"What does that have to do with his height?"

"By her reasoning, it would be an unlucky match. I might unintentionally damage him – ha-ha-ha!"

"Yes, it's amusing. Nevertheless, Chief Engineer McNair and his fellows intend to trapse across the vast expanse searching every nook, so I doubt whether your desire to 'explore' will go unsatisfied. Enough said; hurry along to the Engineering Department."

Exploring the terminal alone was furthest from my mind. It's more fun when the boys were on a quest. If there was any foolishness, they'd get it started, giving me the opportunity to feign innocence in the event something goes amiss. The flaw in my thinking is discounting my boundless enthusiasm and weakness for suggestion. I am overdue for a sizable dose of play! It's inevitable: I'm getting messy. Here she comes, smart boys!

Drafting

In January, Mr. McNair discovered an old trunk during the moving of the company archives into his new records building. The contents of this battered relic included a hodgepodge of plans for improvements dating back to the early years of the railroad. Since he needed to keep me busy doing something barely useful, my assignment for the next two weeks is redrawing these plans on

vellum so the Engineering Department can have its own set for some vague purpose yet to be determined. Needless to say, my trusty dog-eared copy of the *Annotated Index to the Port Unity Messenger* is always at arm's length. Newspaper articles concerning the environs of the railroad terminal interest me for several reasons: the earliest photographs of station buildings date to the 1870s; there are no extant architectural drawings prior to 1887; and during the construction of the new Unity Station a few years ago, workers unearthed interesting things which nobody expected. I wanted to see them! Alrighty, let's start!

I am making quick work of a pile of curious numbered drawings of brick structures with vaulted ceilings, arched culverts, and cut stone sluices. We surmised that these are working drawings showing details of the masonry, but no hint of the whole. Some of the numbers in the set were missing. Mr. McNair thought it was a drainage system for the passenger yard, the vaulted sections were junctions similar to those under the streets in the old section of Port Unity. Some enclose the streams which once cut through neighborhoods on their way to the river. That said, workers dug up most of the old drainage culverts in the yards during regrading. They replaced them with iron pipe and gutters. Nevertheless, recent construction projects uncovered many structures thought removed and some unknown.

Uh-oh, Uncle Roscoe is taking me to a special "historical" performance tomorrow night and a lecture Saturday morning. I have to dress in my finery, too. Why can't he take Liz? She enjoys the attention and knows how to navigate the social snags. Being closer to Uncle Roscoe's age is an advantage, too.

Ella is going to be on display. I brought her my mother's jewel box so she could pick out a necklace for the occasion. Unlike most young ladies of our class, our gentlemen thought it best to shelter us from the effrontery of public scrutiny, particularly the overt cruelty of the local rumor mill, so we rarely participate in high-society rituals. The striking, college-educated "Lady Elizabeth" is a glutton for the limelight and relishes mingling with the muckety-mucks. I doubt whether our pursuit of further academic busyness will move us up of peg, much less place us on the same plane with Liz. I remain the amiable, overly-high-spirited odd girl and Ella, a cynical, aloof, pragmatist. It seems probable that college might enhance these attributes rather than mute them. Even now, we devote ample time to scholarly diversions without any noticeable polish, save an impressive battery of "pretty words" to garnish our sophomoric musings.

Mr. McNair showed me a collection of rare site maps in the company archives going back to the 1830s. One from the files of the company's first chief engineer received the most attention. It included a planned system of culverts to bring water to the station and it matched some of the detailed drawings in the trunk.

Port Unity Terminal covers a large area and includes three sections: the lower yards and company wharves at the river, Unity Station, the passenger yard, and the upper yards. An excavation with retaining walls called the inclined plane connects the upper and lower yards. It is like a ramp inside a deep ditch, stretching over 3,000 feet, allowing the freight trains to descend from an elevation of thirty-six feet above the river to the company wharves. It interrupts seven streets – the terminal, built outside the old boundary of the town, predates all but one. Three have bridges, the rest end at the cut. Prior to the construction of Unity Station, Mr. McNair prepared a compilation of maps of the terminal and its environs redrawn from the originals stored in the archives. They date back to 1862 and he included a transcription of the 1835 deed. Since there

were several copies of the large bound volume, he recommended that I have one at home to study. Knowing I was fond of taking photographs he spent some time showing me how to use the camera in his office. It was like mine only much larger. So, when we went exploring my task was taking the photographs. Wonderful; I was excited! Where? Mr. McNair wanted to take a closer look at some ruins near the south abutment of the Fourth Street Bridge. This is where he planned to put his road. Also, it happened to be on the path running behind the brick wall at the rear of my grandfather's yard.

"Pedestrians use this strip of posted railroad property as a cut-through between the bridges. The iron fencing will put an end to that. Furthermore, we can finally put these separate lots to effective use when constructing the new retaining wall. That way, we avoid interrupting traffic through the cut."

"Trespassers can enter the inclined plane at the embankment for the Sixth Street Bridge."

"There's nothing we can do about that. The bridge easement is county property. Regardless, we are concerned with something else. The company excavated the inclined plane in 1845. Before that, it was a ravine through which a shallow stream ran. Its source was a pond fed by a spring located near the present-day passenger yard switching tower. When my predecessor had the yard graded, the stream reverted to its original course through the inclined plane. It now drains through gutters and pipes to the river. The company, however, retained a wide strip of land on the south side of the cut even though there were no improvements planned for it. That suggests the possibility that the ruins of a long-forgotten brick culvert remain buried there. It channeled water from the pond downhill to a cistern at the terminal. That is, if the company built the structure depicted in the old drawings. There are several particularly good reasons why they needed it."

With the station and workshops located on a bluff, the lower yards below, and then a marsh, it made sense using spring water flowing downward than pumping upward from an intake located a hundred feet out into the river. The thought of discovering a subterranean relic from the primitive era of railroading, something borrowed from the science of canals, made me more excited than ever!

Ghost sighting

I decided to go up into the belvedere and lookout for the "ghost" lady through the telescope. It was drizzling, so it seemed unlikely that she would brave the weather to entertain her craving for haunting. About twilight, I caught sight of her – the white blouse – walking the path down the slope at the abutment of the Sixth Street Bridge. She's early! Rather than enter the incline, the lady took shelter under the bridge deck. I scrambled downstairs to the telephone. It took forever for the operator to make my connection; then, an excruciatingly long time passed before somebody answered. I explained what I was doing, and that Mr. Hennessy told me to call. The officer said he would leave a note for Major Durant. That was it! I bounded up the steps just in time to see the lady pass behind the brick wall at the rear of the house, so I raced downstairs again to make another telephone call. It was an exact repeat of the first time, except the officer said the nightwatchman said somebody in the upper yard saw "the ghost" cross the tracks before daybreak. That was the only sighting that day. What? He cut me off! I called back. Finally, somebody answered. I told him that I saw the "ghost" behind the house. "Lady, I think you've had enough for one night." That was it! Enough?

Evening at the theatre

Myrna passed me our journal before she retired. When does “Miss Something-or-other and Whatnot” have the time to do her writing? After having fun with her “smart boys” out-of-doors, I’ve noticed her arms and face darkening, the pallor of our months in cold storage, gone. Her entries are more amusing than this evening’s play! I take that back. The local nabobs were giving a benefit performance of something. Oftentimes, a performance is so wrong you cringe; but this one left me dumbfounded: what was that? Clustering about a compilation of fatuous local legends associated with a celebrated nobody who achieved no enduring good were extraneous discursive episodes of song and dance that sucked away the dramatic momentum like ticks. High above the chorus of weak voices and discordant instruments blasted a mezzosoprano with a Billy-goat vibrato, selfishly savoring each note to the point of dragging the tempo. Curiously, the whole production felt rehearsed, everything wrong meticulously preserved. Uncle Roscoe’s expressions were amusing. He rolled his eyes, winced, gazed at the ceiling, cleared his throat, shook his head, tightened his lips, looked at the floor, rubbed his forehead, and took a deep breath, all over the course of one song. The monologues between the caterwauling describe the heroic adventures of Titus Sics, an early settler on the Northeast River. One of the last Sics descendants committed the stories to paper in the 1830s and by 1853, the Messenger started publishing them in consecutive issues. The name of the Sics patriarch rarely appears in official documents of the period, so proving or disproving most of these “adventures” is impossible. Even so, they celebrate one of the intrepid founders and that’s all that counts. With the extraneous absurd to-do, the epic sinks into a sea of muddle-muddle-muddle! [The founding families are Culver, Hall, Haynes, Phelps, Sics, Smallwood, and Waddell. The Haynes and Sics lines died out.]

This was my opportunity to meet the convivial patriarch of The Family, “King of Business” Samuel Culver. [Sam Culver is the son of John Culver, a land developer who drank too much during a hunting trip, wandered onto the railroad bridge over the Northeast River, and fell off. His widow was Beatrice Smallwood Culver. She married Alan Deschamps, nephew of Mr. Georges Deschamps. Her twin sister is Lavinia Smallwood Hall, widow of Captain Elias Hall.] He remarked that I was the reincarnation of my grandmother. I am, but he was referring to Anna LeQuire Levesque. A graying match for Count von Rohrzange in our comic serial, Mr. Culver is precise in his diction and devilishly amusing, very unusual to find south of Richmond. His country squire neighbor in Northeast Township is more like it: “Mighty-fine gal you have there, Hennessy. That wouldn’t happened to be Miss Myrna. Yep, sure is! About time the old man let her out of the pen.” [Ha-ha-ha!] Constraining my French, I merely smiled, then offered him my hand. His eyes fixed upon my signet ring. There’s the proof! Ha! Did they even know we are two: Les Femmes Lévesque?

This was an experiment: we let them believe what they were inclined to believe. I just had to be Myrna! What did they ever do to deserve the truth? How would they use it? Circulate fictions, what else! Myrna helped me dress; I am wearing her jewels: why not be her second? The whole evening seemed ludicrous.

There is a lecture at the Old Academy Ballroom tomorrow morning. Dr. Delmer G. Willis, a historian, is delivering a paper on the early settlers along the Northeast River, namely The Family. Uncle Roscoe wants me to “tag along” for a scholarly tribute to this clan of land hungry buccaneers. Beyond the orbit of a few counties, they are worthy of a footnote. The exploits of the recent batch of descendants are interesting to say the least but that is outside the scope of the lecture.

Caught again!

Saturday, May 20, 1916. Granddaddy James was off doing something, as he is apt to do on a moment's notice, and Ella left with Mr. Hennessy after breakfast; so, in the mid-afternoon, it was about time to take a stroll. I was ready to do a walk-through of my *Capture of Fräulein Geisterdame*. My precious pass was inside my little bag, the tiny handle looped through my sash. The dress doesn't have pockets. Time to go! Oh-no, it's Mrs. Keane.

"Where are you off to, Myrna? Plan on getting messy running around creation with those McNair boys?"

"No, ma'am; that's next week. Major Durant needs me for some investigating around the corner at the bridge. That's where he thinks trespassers are slipping into the lower yards. I know how they do it."

"So, the old rascal is nudging you into police work. When are you coming back?"

"You know the Major. He'll keep me all afternoon."

"Just like your granddaddy: sauntering off without saying a word, and then expecting a hot meal on the table when he decides to come home. I'm not taking chances with you. Dinner is ready at six! All the same, you're not having so much as a nibble until you clean up. Take off those boots before setting foot in here!"

"Yes, ma'am. Have to go; the Major is waiting on me." Slipping past Mrs. Keane isn't easy. This time, I was going into the inclined plane. At the path leading down to the embankment, I hesitated for a moment – NO TRESPASSING. When did that stop me? DANGER – the next freight train passing through was hours off. TRESPASSERS WILL BE ARRESTED – So? I had my passes. That failing, Major Durant was expecting me. I decided to do a thorough examination of the interior of the inclined plane before the walk-through. Still, with each step on the path, the beating of my heart quickened. Upon reaching bottom, my composure returned. Uh-huh, no turning back now.

There was ample space to walk along the dirt road between the south track and the wall. I decided to take a leisurely stroll to the lower yards. The stone retaining wall started at head height, with a thick buttressed end piece. It grew higher, no, deeper, with the descent, until the walls towered overhead. It was solid, no nooks for hiding. The iron grates under foot spaced about every twenty feet covered stone gutters, water trickling through steadily. That was the stream Mr. McNair told me about. Upon stooping down to take a closer look, Sergeant Quince called out to me from behind. "Stay put! You're surrounded!" At that moment, I noticed Officer Billy Hubbard approaching rapidly through the inclined from Fifth Street, followed by Officer Tom Fowler. Behind him, coming down the embankment at the Sixth Street Bridge was Officer Fred Carter. He assumed his position inside the inclined plane at the base of the embankment. Turning my head, I saw Officer Albert McComber charging up from the lower yards. In short order, the fellows had me boxed in against the south wall. Success! Hurrah! Sergeant Quince was pleased. "That's a capture, gentlemen! Excellent work!" He held up a redrawn diagram of the maneuver. "Just like this! By the time she figured out what was happening we had her. What do you think, Miss Levesque?"

"Wonderful! You fellows took me completely by surprise."

"I hope you didn't forget your pass."

"No, sir. I have them here." I removed the envelope from my bag with two fingers and presented it to him with a flourish. Upon unsealing it, Mr. Quince removed two tickets to Thursday night's performance of *The Rivals*. Oh, I want to see it!"

"These are no good here, ma'am. Please say you have another envelope." I gave him a sheepish grin. "No company papers?" Oops! Here we go – uh-huh, handcuffs.

Major Durant rolled his eyes and then gave me an exasperated look. I was in trouble now.

"So, Miss Levesque, you got yourself arrested again."

"That's right: hands locked up, and an impressive escort through the lower yards. I'm definitely a dangerous sort!"

"I suppose so. Did you lose your pass?"

"No, sir. The envelope that Mr. Hennessy gave me contained his theatre tickets. This time, I only forgot my employee papers."

"Considering the inconveniences, did it not occur to you to check before venturing out?"

"Yes, but the word written on the front of the envelope in elegant script is "passes," just the wrong type. Since I lost the last one, I figured he included a spare. You know me – ha-ha-ha! No matter: I have an hour and a half to waste before dinner. The cuffs are an even better fit this time, nicely snug – I just keep growing – and they really work surprisingly well! See, I can't reach my bag. Your office looks much better with the wainscoting; I really like the brass fixtures, too. Oh, there's the telephone! Nice! When do you suppose they'll finish?"

"Not soon enough. Sergeant Quince, I am assuming that you are the arresting officer?"

"Yes, sir, I found her inside the inclined plane. We did the walk-through according to her diagrams. The maneuver she figured out works fine; safe, too. I plan to show it to Sergeant Frier."

"She's a clever one. Fortunately, with all the maneuvering, you still remembered to ask to see her pass. So, Myrna, did the Chief Inspector send you out to test the efficiency of the station patrols in light of that regrettable debacle in the inclined plane?"

"Why not? Who better than a rough-and-tumble tagalong girl? In the old-old days, the fellows would have sent me out in the clearing with a worn-out spear to chase the ziggurats into the boxer canyon where they waited, ready to pick them off with their fancy new absinthe-tipped arrows."

"The devil you say, Mrs. Partington! I'm recording all your arrests as training exercises; and when the officers need routine evaluations pertaining to their duties, you're volunteering to be their mock miscreant, that is, when you have a break from organizing our records. Otherwise, you'll assist Ella in setting up the office for the women officers that Mr. Hennessy is hiring in the fall. Mr. Buchanan thinks Mr. McNair and Mr. Skinner are politicking with the superintendent to have you transferred out from under his department, so he reluctantly approved my request to train you for duties in my division permanently starting in two weeks. Don't ask me about it now." He removed a card from his desk drawer and scribbled his signature on it. "This pass is good until then starting Monday. Don't lose it!" He placed the pass inside my little bag. "For the time being, Mr. Quince must prepare a report detailing these maneuvers. Are you going to behave yourself?"

"Yes; but taking the word of a handcuffed woman might not be prudent. It's rumored those brunettes are the most treacherous." The other officers laughed but quickly assumed their unconvincing stern expressions when the Major glared at them.

"I take that to mean unlocking your cuffs is ill-advised." Mr. Quince, I am almost certain that you don't need the assistance of officers McComber and Hubbard to manage her. Let them resume their patrol. As for you, don't pay any mind to her. Miss Levesque considers you her captive audience. The girl is a born comic that doesn't know when to quit. Unfortunately, it's hard not to sop-up a heady dose of it. Normally, we don't put up with saucy types, but we can't lock her in the *Rowdy Room* because there isn't a woman officer to watch her." Intriguing! "Just attend to the prisoner according to the manual while I pull her file." Officer Quince sat me in the chair alongside the typewriter desk and began filling in his report. He is a good typist but takes a long time figuring

out what to write. It must be grammatically perfect and read smoothly. He needed some help – ha-ha-ha!

“Since this might take a while, allow me to entertain you with the latest installment of my adventure story. While on a secret mission to stop Doktor Blister and Fräulein Geisterdame from wiring a deadly *Kartoffelpuffer* to the bridge at *Rien-ici*, the daring balloonist and spy Mademoiselle LeQuire encountered a patrol from the fearsome *Fleischwolf Chorknaben* division. After leading them in a night-long chase through the Adrienne Forest, they captured her – handcuffs, absolutely! She is a dangerous woman. The officers took our heroine to *Schloss Schweinshaxe*, the mountain stronghold of the charming, handsome, and somewhat-evil Count von Rohrzanze. To ply her tongue, he offered her a hot glass of his vintage Snallygaster, topped with intoxicating *Auslese* mash and heavy cream. Well, that’s all until the next edition. What do you think?” The Major escorted me home with plenty of time to spare. Oops!

Women Officers

Monday, May 22, 1916. The company has never had women station police officers, but Uncle Roscoe and the Major want them in the fall. I’m training Myrna as one, even though I have no practical experience, so Elizabeth Buchanan, a railroad detective who has never left the administrative palace, will know how to prepare her three women officers. Next summer, under the tutelage of the Major, Myrna completes her training as a station police officer and then... Uncle Roscoe is assigning both of us to Mr. Skinners’ department. Right, a true Levesque girl needs to know how to repair locomotives. Myrna is eager to throw herself into it; but after earning my badge, I would rather continue as a railroad detective. Unfortunately, the old men are educating us in skills that nobody is going to allow us to perform because we need to ride reign over those who replace them. As corporate matriarchs, we need to keep an eye on management. Both of us are going to end up in administration. That’s still years off, I hope...

The Major told me that Mr. Hennessy gave Myrna an envelope containing his theatre tickets rather than her pass. She also forgot to carry her employee papers. The officers took her into custody, as they should, even though the Major was expecting her in the office anyway. Myrna veut jouer à des jeux avec les messieurs. [Uh-huh!] Uncle Roscoe was satisfied. Myrna wouldn’t say whether he asked her to play the role of negligent employee again, but I suspect both she and my uncle made mistakes. Nevertheless, Myrna and I are going to the theatre along with Uncle Roscoe and Liz. I have a feeling that Miss Buchanan is responsible for mixing up the envelopes deliberately. Once again, he was hoping to take me because I am a passable counterfeit for what he thinks the nabobs think a true Levesque girl should be – that reads like a Myrna sentence. Instead, Frank and Louis are joining us; and since the tickets are good for any seat in the house, we plan to sit together in the mezzanine out of view. Ordinary attire should be fine. I have no intention of dressing to impress. That will please Myrna and the boys since the only thing they care about is having a pleasant outing.

Ghost in the station

Around two o’clock Sunday morning, a watchman spotted the “ghost” dashing along the service road leading from the locomotive shop to the Sixth Street Bridge. At that time, the only activity in the passenger yard was the night shift mechanics at work in the shops. That she ventured into an area for maintaining company equipment was disturbing. Furthermore, employees in the station offices reported having seen a “very tall office girl” that they didn’t know walking through the service passageways. Is the intruder passing herself off as an office girl to enter the station

unnoticed? Then again, people tend to see what they are looking to see. The story of the daring escape of the “ghost” from the patrol circulated through the offices at Unity Station and corporate headquarters. The company employs several taller than average ladies, including us, so one going about her errands receives undue scrutiny, particularly from those in need of some excitement. Nevertheless, the Major wants Ella to study the service halls and passageways in the station next week. That’s two stories of public area, six stories of offices, and two levels of basement. Fortunately, we have Mr. McNair’s model and plans at home. I am ready to start grinding away at it, but Mr. McNair has other work which requires my immediate attention.

Uncle Roscoe and the Major met to discuss the possibility that the ‘ghost’ was prowling the terminal with harmful intent. Dispensing with unreliable reports, terminal watchmen and foremen in the upper yards reported seeing a tall woman in a white blouse walking through posted areas six times, the station officers encountered a woman fitting the same description once, and Myrna reported having seen a woman trespasser on the same day a watchman communicated a similar sighting. The locations of these occurrences include the upper yards, the inclined plane, and the service road in the passenger yard. What was at these sites? Mechanics servicing locomotives; crews making up freight trains; and an expansive trench containing several arrays of track: a lone thief on foot would be hard-pressed to find anything in these places easily carried off, save commonplace tools of inconsequential value. What about sabotage? If workers find company property anywhere on the line tampered with or vandalized, managers notify Uncle Roscoe first. During the past year, he received no reports of that kind from Unity Terminal other than those finally attributed to normal wear. Espionage? They weren’t sure. Considering the likelihood of tumbling into the European ruckus, the port would play a significant role, and consequently, the railroad. It seems in the best interest of certain governments to send agents to reconnoiter the resources of a potential enemy in advance of a declaration of war. So, what could a spy learn from her nocturnal escapades in the terminal? Major Durant considered its vulnerabilities a useful piece of intelligence, but every reliable report placed her in the terminal on a Friday or Sunday. What happens in the upper yards then that doesn’t happen daily? Nothing; the work schedule doesn’t change. The same holds true for the lower yards and the workshops.

Uncle Roscoe recalled what Myrna told him about entering the terminal through the opening in the fence behind the ruins of the old paint shop. It was another way to reach the service road connecting everything. The Locomotive Shop was nearby, but it seemed more likely the lady was sneaking in behind the ruins and had to pass the shops to get to the service road. Another branch went to the baggage department loading dock off the concourse. Was the Major investigating the possibility of an intruder breaking into the station after business hours? Of course, he was! “Ella Levesque is making an inventory of weak points in the terminals design whereby an intruder might gain entry.”

Surprise! Myrna grew a half-inch over the academic year. She is five-foot-eleven and a half! Her grandfather is six-foot-one; and her late father was about the same. Nevertheless, I think she’s done. We’ll see next year. [Uh-huh, I’m done!] After arriving home, Mrs. Keane told me that a gentleman from Bland’s Dress Shop dropped off our uniforms, two apiece. Myrna, who was still in the bath, said we should try them on after dinner. I agreed. We waited until Mr. Levesque started playing the piano to return upstairs to change. Upon seeing us in new uniforms, he said we looked like first class British motor transport drivers! Mrs. Keane was pleased. [They are much lighter, a better fit, and amazingly comfortable! The fabric is high quality, too. Nice! Our old uniforms were better suited for cool weather. Liz must have had a hand in ordering up these improvements.]

Excavations

Hello, Imaginary Ladies! Myrna is having so much fun this week that she neglected to copy her scribbles into our summer journal. Company Architect and Chief Engineer Edmund McNair, Frank, Louis, our girl, and an entire track crew have created a gash in the company land on the south side of the inclined plane stretching five blocks! That includes the strip behind our back wall. Trucks and wagons are still bringing up dirt from a special car in the lower yards. It's a mess! Myrna loves it. Every afternoon, she comes home dusty, drenched in perspiration, wearing her comfortable drab clothes. [It's fun!] Mlle Myrna a joué dans la terre. [I do not!] Elle est la déesse du désordre. [I am not!] Uncle Roscoe told Mr. McNair to take her directly to where they are working without coming to corporate headquarters. What is she doing to get so filthy? Taking pictures down holes and dank underground chambers, sometimes partway inside dangling upside-down, or her "smart boys" lower her in on a rope: that's our Myrna. She's become the talk of the fellows on the track crew, and word has spread about that "spunky girl photographer who's not afraid of anything." The Major heard about it and told his men that "The Girl" was their Myrna. They think she is marvelous, too! Just imagine, the "strange girl" on campus is extremely popular with the gents. I anticipate she might be a distraction in the office, so we need to keep her busy.

While the gentlemen were having a protracted discussion, each trying to describe the workings of something best understood after fetching a shovel, I ventured over to the abutment of the Fourth Street Bridge to admire the smooth black stones in the ancient pier from the original bridge (1830s) and makes some sketches. It stood about eight feet tall and looked to be only about six feet wide at the top. There were two retaining walls: one mostly buried at the abutment; the other, at the inclined plane. It was an impressive drop to the tracks! The abutment of the new bridge, actually, the second new bridge (1884), was at least twelve feet high and extended to the road at least twenty, all constructed with granite block. Earth and gravel piled up on both sides formed slopes to the surrounding ground covering the abutment of the first new bridge (1876). So, there you have it: the legacy of fifty years of bridgebuilding. Isn't it funny how men are always eager to build something new but have little enthusiasm for clearing away their previous handywork? It was there, I found something exciting: a two-foot gap between the base of the ballast stone pier and the mound; and halfway in, I could see the top two feet of a door opening. After borrowing Frank's fancy cigar lighter, I squeezed in between the pier and the mound, and then worked myself in through the door opening. Partially clogged with sand, the ridiculously small room was a marvel. Built of cut stone block, it had an arched ceiling made of glazed brick and lacked window openings. In one corner, I found two laundry sacks, one empty, and the other containing two folded blankets and a sheet. Quickly, I scrambled out, the task being more difficult than getting in. The gentleman, engrossed in their debate didn't realize I wondered off!

"How goes the work, sir?" Mr. McNair frowned.

"What happened to you?"

"I found the old Haynes tomb!"

"You did? Where?"

"Come see! There's laundry inside!" Uh-huh, I found a hiding place for laundry? What? Nevertheless, I found it; and was not particularly troubled by having to crawl into it again. The boys were too wide and inflexible to do it. I emerged with the evidence! Mr. McNair sent Louis to bring Mr. Hennessy. Meanwhile, I retrieved the hairbrush from my bag and my hat, hoping to make myself presentable. That wasn't entirely possible since the soil was a mix of fine dust and sand, but I tried. Getting messy is not in my nature; it is a consequence of following my natural inclinations. At that moment, I was inclined to eat ginger snaps.

When Mr. Hennessy arrived, Mr. McNair let him look. It was a dry cistern with a spill-over wall at center and culverts feeding in from the east and out to the west.

"How many, Mr. McNair?"

"I don't know, but we can figure it out. See, what we have here is a gentle slope from Eighth to Fifth, a sharply descending slope from Fifth to First, then a twenty-two-foot drop from the bluff to River Street. This cistern does two things: it stores water, and it regulates the velocity of the flow. it's stepping down. I think there are several between here and the intake."

"Can somebody use the culverts as a passageway?"

"I don't know. To do what?"

"Get from the end of it to the upper yards."

"Rose to Eighth is better, all public way, too. Don't worry about this. We're going to bust it up and fill as we go along. It would be nice to figure it out: make measurements, drawings, and whatnot. It's engineering history, but I can't imagine any use for it. Miss Levesque found something! I suppose rain over the years exposed the opening to the Haynes tomb, a little mausoleum dating back to the days before the railroad. Somebody has been storing their laundry inside."

"What?" I handed Mr. Hennessy the sacks. "Yes; I can see. I'm sure you can spare one of the gentlemen from your office to escort Miss Levesque home shortly. She appears to be. yes, quite so. Right, let us look." I took Mr. Hennessy to my find. He, too, was unable to squeeze between the pier and tomb.

"Very good, Miss Levesque; now, describe what you found."

"Two laundry sacks; one empty and another containing two folded blankets and a bed sheet; clean, freshly washed, and wrapped in laundry paper, no tags."

"That is strange. Now, describe what we know about this, this tomb."

"From what we uncovered during our research, it most likely was occupied by members of the Haynes family. Notes appended to the 1835 deed suggest that the descendants removed the remains for reinterment elsewhere when they sold the land to the company. The sarcophagi are gone; they took the door, too. For the walls, the masons used cut stone, certainly brought by ship, and it has a barrel ceiling made of carved stone and brick – nice! – and I suppose it had or has, a gable roof made of wood and slate. What's going to happen to it?"

"That's up to the county. The bridge and surrounding easement are their property so I must notify Sheriff Smallwood about our discovery. It could be a hazard or at least a nuisance."

"Sir, eventually somebody is coming back for their laundry. If it's missing, don't expect a return visit."

"True enough. We cannot have tramps encamping on the perimeter of the terminal. Crawl back in and place those sacks where you found them; and when you have a chance, watch it with your telescope. If you see somebody crawl in telephone the station police."

"I'll tell the officer on duty that I saw a tramp crawl into the hidden tomb beneath the bridge to retrieve his bed sheets."

"When you put it that way, it's best to make notes of what you see. I'll pass it on to the sheriff. Excellent work."

"Thank you, sir." After handing Mr. Hennessy my hat, I returned the laundry bags to their place in the tomb. By this time, I was able to get out with little effort quickly, but it involved crawling. Dust and sand covered my clothes and hair thoroughly.

"My-my, Myrna, messy-messy-messy, run along and tidy up." With that, Mr. Hennessy took his leave. Despite his advice I stayed on with Mr. McNair and the boys. They found and marked

other subterranean structures – probing, not digging – at the block between Fourth and Third, and behind my grandfather's back wall between Fifth and Sixth. Frank and Louis saw me home. Mrs. Keane pounced.

“Hello, boys! What did you talk her into doing this time?” That was fun!

On Wednesday, we had another exciting day of excavation. This was the day I took photographs of the interior of a cistern from above while Frank held my ankles to keep me from falling in headfirst. Mr. McNair walked me home after we finished for the day. Mrs. Keane threw a fit! After berating him for getting me dirtier than his grandsons, she told me to go around to the back steps, take off my boots, and then go directly to a bathtub. With my thorough scrubbing complete and having dressed properly for dinner I returned downstairs to await Ella's arrival. This time Mr. Hennessy brought her home. Immediately he asked whether somebody could use the culverts to move about unseen for any purpose. That was a hard question to answer. I had a feeling "any purpose" presupposed getting in. What was he asking me?

"Sir, Mr. McNair is in a better position to provide the answer."

"I know, Myrna. I'm asking you."

"Very well; having seen the interior of one of the cisterns from an awkward position, I am certain that a person who can pull themselves up six feet and through a two-foot opening can overcome the spillover wall. Getting inside from above is not easy. If moving about the terminal unseen is the object regardless of purpose any crafty rascal knows doing so above ground offers better choices, including those for concealment and escape."

"Let us return to the problem at hand. A sledgehammer can break through the spill-over walls inside the cistern; providing the connecting culverts are intact, our hypothetical wrongdoer can walk underground parallel to the inclined plane for most of its length. Is that correct?"

"We have yet to open a culvert but at this time it appears possible, providing there is some ventilation. There is an opening somewhere because air flowed through when we opened a cistern."

"For the time being, let us say it is possible. This underground tunnel is located on the south side of the inclined plane about fifty feet from the rear of privately owned parcels and passing under several public roads. What if anything comes to mind concerning its usefulness to the wrongdoer? Think about that. If you happen to come up with something, I want to hear it." Alrighty, up we go in the imagination balloon. Uh-huh, it's Doktor Blister and his saboteurs.

Our heroine, the engineers' clever photographer, Mademoiselle LeQuire, persuaded her boys to lower her down into the cistern to take pictures because only she is slender enough to fit through the opening. While inside, she discovered a fuse running along the bottom leading to a box of dynamite. She cut the fuse, but there is another leading into the connecting culverts, and so on.

"The old masonry and mortar retaining walls are in poor condition. That's why Mr. McNair wants them replaced with ones of reenforced concrete. A saboteur set upon disrupting the connection between the railroad and the port could plant powerful explosives inside the cisterns to bring down the retaining wall on that side and tons of earth, blocking passage to the lower yards and company wharves." Mr. Hennessy gave me a curious look.

"That is very disconcerting, Myrna. Did that gem of treachery just emerge in your thoughts?"

"Isn't that why you asked me?"

"Yes, so tell me more."

“The arrangement of culverts and cisterns is situated about ten feet behind the retaining wall; the bottom of the cisterns is ten or more feet below ground level; the mortar joints between stones on the retaining wall are so old whole sections have fallen out, eroded down, or have turned to powder; the footings for the wall have settled in places causing vertical cracks in the stonework; and the surface of the wall between Fifth and Fourth is damp. That said, Mr. McNair’s model shows the walls on both sides rebuilt in concrete and that is currently on his mind. The cisterns and culverts will be gone by the end of the week and the entire strip of company land cleared of vegetation: no place for a saboteur, spy, or common thief to hide. No matter: it makes for a dandy story plot.

“I take it to be your method of analyzing a situation?”

“I’m a strange girl.”

“No doubt; yet I regard your eccentricities as assets. I’ll get Mr. McNair’s opinion on whether your scenario is possible.”

The Imagination Balloon

Saturday, after lunch, we went up to the third floor to examine Mr. McNair’s model and the most recent set of plans for Unity Station. Myrna had scribbled some notes this morning while daydreaming, but I had a clever plan that I wanted to share first. “Want to hear something I jotted down?”

We need to help the officers catch a habitual trespasser with exceptional athletic skills. From her perch in the belvedere atop our three-story house, Myrna has an excellent view of the lady’s stomping grounds and has seen her once behind our wall. However, alerting Major Durant by telephone takes too long, and sometimes the officer answering is rude to her. I have an idea. Since the belvedere is visible from every part of Unity Terminal, let Miss Myrna ask her engineer admirers to construct a bright electric light signal to warn the patrols that the lady intruder is on the romp again. I say a white light since the officers can’t mistake it for anything else.

“Brilliant, Ella! Let’s tell Frank and Louis. They’re coming by for dinner.”

“Another thing occurred to me: there are windows on all sides of the belvedere. It’s possible to see somebody coming in the clear patches between the trees in several directions for blocks, and the same is true for the streets north of the terminal. The boys can help with the watch.

“Now, we have an adventure for them!”

“So, Myrna... Which one do you like?”

“Both. How about you?”

“Both; but if you favor one a tad more, the other is fine with me.”

“It’ll work out better if you tag along. Aren’t you getting tired of going to the theatre and lectures with your Uncle Roscoe?”

“Yes!”

“Wonderful! Frank and Louis are planning an expedition next week and I’m going along as usual. Don’t you want to join us?”

“Do I need to bring a shovel?”

“You could.”

“I have a better idea.”

My ploy for getting Frank and Louis to spend time with us rather than contrariwise was simple: invite them to help us design and build the signal light; encourage them to join us in the watch; and feed them.

Ella wanted to rope Frank and Louis into joining the ghost hunt. Hooking them was easy: making the signal light. Having the four of us working together on it in my cellar workshop was the best part. We could pick their brains, too. Of course, there had to be trips to the hardware store, fetching sandwiches along the way. Who knows, we might accidentally drop into the Magic Lantern and see the picture show? We needed help with the watch in the belvedere, and there was a nice tree in the back yard to set up a lookout post. In time, we might find ourselves unsuspectingly paired up. That sounded grand! The best part for Ella she could have some fun without her Uncle Roscoe reining her in. All we needed was plenty of fried chicken, sweet tea, and a box of cigars. Ella and I were looking forward to launching an invasion of the kitchen after Mrs. Keane and the staff retired for the day. We want fried chicken! Granddaddy James wants it, too! Unfortunately, our empress of diet decreed that boiled and baked chicken was better for our health and it's not messy. Where's the fun in that? I don't understand how that woman acquired so much control over the domestic concerns of the Levesque household, but we shall muddle through in our usual way, deception.

Myrna had a story for me, too: Mademoiselle LeQuire and the Saboteur. In her text, she referenced the schedule for the rounds of the watchmen and the patrols of the officers – “the glorious clockwork” of Major Durant. His system was manifest throughout the terminal. Imagining herself Mademoiselle LeQuire in her balloon, she hovered aloft peering down at a mechanical toy where painted tin uniformed men move on tracks on Mr. McNair’s model. Beneath it, an elegant assemblage of interlocking gears.

Amazing! Myrna came to the same conclusion through her morning daydreaming that Uncle Roscoe and the Major arrived at after a two-hour discussion. [Daydreaming is thinking!] I cannot conjure up something so fantastic from a few sheets of tables. It only became clear when Myrna placed chessmen on the model – the method of an engineering prodigy who retains childlike intuition.

Mademoiselle LeQuire and the Saboteur. On the large model of the terminal tiny toy night watchmen and station police officers are performing their clockwork rounds. The saboteur, however, is a tiny living woman dressed in the garb of a longshoreman trying to outwit the machine. Our heroine, Mademoiselle LeQuire, in her imagination balloon high above the terminal, peered through her spyglass. Ah-ha, there she is, scrambling down the mound at the Sixth Street Bridge, and then heading up to Seventh Street through the inclined plane. Why not cross the bridge? If she were heading towards the station, this would be the best route; but her target is the switching tower in the opposite direction. Also, the inclined plane at Seventh is approaching level with Eighth. Midway between the streets is the tower. Thus, the villainess avoids detection as she sprints a block and a half. The time is 2:18 in the morning. In forty-two minutes, the first of the early morning freight trains passes down to the lower yards. Fräulein Geisterdame must walk east towards Eighth Street 165 feet; and then, turn north, crossing the tracks to the switching tower, another 165 feet. All the while, the watchmen in the upper yards at the completion of their rounds might see her. This leaves the fiendish girl with not enough time to sabotage the switches and escape. So, she must wait. The second early morning freight leaves the lower yards at 3:30. The rounds of the watchmen place them near the workshops of the upper yards. Uh-huh; perfect timing! She sets to work planting her

Eisenbahn Obstkuchen. Mademoiselle LeQuire knows how to thwart her. If one of the watchmen began his rounds a half-hour earlier, by the time he returned to Eighth Street his counterpart would be at the shops. This change cuts the saboteur's time to make her way to the switching tower and back in half. So, exactly, how is this naughty lady going to carry through this sabotage with so little time to spare? She can't. Unfortunately, it's too late to change the schedule. Suddenly, the clockwork stopped, and a dense fog enveloped the scene below. Mademoiselle LeQuire was getting frustrated! Even if the villainess blew the switching tower to high heavens, it wouldn't interrupt transportation for long. If all came to worse, the passenger trains didn't have to go into the station. As when the previous one burnt down, the trains stopped in the upper yards. Our heroine decided to come down to Earth. Alrighty, the "ghost lady" isn't a saboteur. She must be a spy!

It is a matter of avoiding the meshing of the gears! Indeed, the blind spots are coexistent with the regimentation. Now, we should be looking for them in Unity Station. Neither one of us was familiar with parts of the building beyond the public areas, and certainly none of it at night. I thought it best that we walk through the entire building several times, making detailed notes about any feature inside suitable for masking intruders or serving as their hiding place.

Work on "McNair's Road" is ongoing, so the whole area might be less attractive to trespassers. The clearing away of the undergrowth allows the patrols a better view from the opposite side. The embankment at the Sixth Street Bridge remains the weak point. I think the bridge itself is the best place for an intruder to leave the terminal after the station closes. What about the laundry? I'm still puzzling over it: one sack empty and the other containing two blankets and a bed sheet. Why leave the empty one behind?

The Glorious Clockwork

Tuesday, toward the end of our shift, Captain Johnston took us on a stroll to the upper yards by way of the path on the northern boundary of the terminal, pointing out along the way the watchman's key stations and the one telephone box located half the distance. He expected a telephone for it soon. Upon arriving at the guard shack in the upper yards, we turned back. About this time, the afternoon trains started arriving. They passed on the three tracks in front of us that crossed Eighth Street, backing into the station. When the tracks were clear, we dashed back to the path. Within minutes, the departing evening traffic passed on the same tracks we crossed. Mr. Johnston pointed out the men who tended the gates barring traffic on Eighth Street. The public way remained closed until the last of the early evening departures. They closed it off again at nine and at midnight. During the intervening periods, anybody passing over the road had to watch for freight traffic. On returning to the passenger platforms, we passed the watchman inserting a punch key into his round clock. He also closed both gates for the service road passing across the tracks to the Sixth Street Bridge. They remained open after the departure of the overnight expresses. That is when all traffic in the passenger yard ceased until six in the morning. This is where the watchman saw the "ghost" in the early hours.

I had planned to commence Myrna's training this week, but Major Durant wanted to see whether two devious ladies could find more weaknesses in securing the station after hours than his officers. Hitherto, they found none. He could think of several.

We spent the afternoon strolling through the employee corridors on the first and second floors of Unity Station. They lead to the public areas, including the lobby, the Ticket Office, the Baggage

Department, the Restaurant, the Passenger Service Office, the concourse, and the second-floor amenities such as the public telegraph office, post office, gift shop, and ladies' parlor. Additionally, two of the corridors lead to loading docks for deliveries and customer parcel and baggage receiving. Myrna occasionally glanced at her tables and made notes, her mind grinding away, trying to envision the rounds of the nightwatchmen. She recorded the location of the station police telephone boxes on the two floors and concourse.

Station employees scurried through the passageways constantly, and we encountered a few young ladies in white blouses. Office girls strolled through the lobby and hallways with hat in hand and their jacket draped over an arm – more white blouses; the waitresses in the station restaurant differ in that the company does not issue them jackets, only the company pin – white blouses everywhere. Company office girls must wear their uniform jackets and hats when outside their respective offices, but managers are lax about enforcing the policy when the weather is sultry. No wonder the Major was receiving so many reports of sightings! Sometimes, certain puzzles drive you up a tree! I started off the summer racing ahead of myself. Both of us fell into a hole. Major Durant's devilish clockwork meshed in a peculiar way: the watchmen in the station building performed their individual rounds in an hour, six times a night, each methodically pacing the halls of their assigned floors commencing at different points; the officers' patrol emerged from the stairwell precisely as the watchmen arrived in the lobby at the center of the floor. This synchronism occurred on floors four, six, and eight ascending and seven, five, and three descending. Each watchman's round included three floors. They crossed paths in both stairwells and reversed directions on alternating rounds. The lobby position on each floor offered a shotgun view of both stairwell doors and the elevators. How could anybody avoid the meshing of the gears? So, the watchmen lock all the doors in the offices at six o'clock. What about the lavatories? The building had an excess of lavatories, from second basement to the eighth floor. Except for the washrooms in public areas, most were small rooms with a basin and toilet. "Never squander a good thing while you have it!" Their doors latch from the inside. When unoccupied, they remain unlocked, as is the customary practice. Do the watchmen check the lavatories? Let's find out!

Exploring the station

It was an exceptionally long day! At a quarter of five in the morning, we set out from home on foot down Rose Street accompanied by Frank and Louis. Captain Johnston met us at the main entrance before his shift. He introduced us to Mr. Moss, Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Lloyd, the nightwatchmen who worked Monday through Friday. All were finishing their rounds. The answer to our question about lavatories was that they checked them when locking up all the offices at the beginning of their shifts and left them partially cracked open. When the floors cleared of staff, they locked the stairwell doors on the second floor. The elevator operators end their shifts at six, so nobody can come up through the lobby. There are knobs on the stairwell side of the doors that allow the watchmen to open them from the inside (night latches). The opposite is true with the passageway door opening into the stairwell of the third floor. Station police patrolling the offices enter and exit through it during their patrols. An intruder cannot backtrack. The only way out is through the main lobby and past the first-floor officer. There wasn't any point in searching the lavatories after the watchmen secured the building.

I happened upon a vast hiding place in the passageway on the second floor. Set halfway up the wall was a small square door without a lock. It bore a sign: Danger! Electricians Only! Mr. Johnston refused us a look-see, adding that we needed to speak with the electricians during business hours. "In the meantime, study your architect's drawings." We had! The door opened to

the catwalks above the ceiling arching over the first and second floors. Later in the morning, we persuaded the station manager to have the Master Electrician on duty give us a tour. Following the gentleman's lead, we hoisted ourselves upward and inside foregoing a hand up. After our guide turned the light switch, we beheld four sturdy catwalks built of thick yellow pine suspended from the overhead girders by steel rods, all set at arm's length above a cast concrete faux ceiling. They connect by steps at the far end. The electricians used them to change out the ceiling lights and operate the winches to lower the chandeliers when their bulbs needed replacement. Looking upward from the lobby, twenty-eight feet below, one sees beautiful interwoven geometric patterns in the colorful tiles. From the chamber of catwalks, it reminded me of the cramped confines of a mine. On the center one, Myrna's head barely cleared the girders. Can the ceiling support our weight? The electrician thought so, but never tried. The surface of the concrete is smooth, and he imagined it was hard to maintain footing on the slope. Upon returning to the passageway, I remarked that our find was a hiding place of last resort. Climbing inside was awkward, and the door obstructed the view of both ends of the passageway unless opened fully. Furthermore, it was the only way out.

The maintenance supervisor gave us the grand tour of the mysterious underworld beneath the marble floor of the main lobby. Aside from the large room housing the workshop and offices of his department, the remaining space contained three gigantic pumps run by powerful electric motors, the pipes feeding them emerged from an arched tunnel like the culverts Mr. McNair discovered. I was excited!

"Sir, how far does this tunnel extend?"

"From time to time, we need to inspect the pipes supplying water to the station. This tunnel runs under the concourse. There, it intersects with another containing the pipes going to the annex. In the space at the end of the concourse on the walk to the locomotive shop there is a little brick building. An enormous pipe coming up behind it, runs above ground to the end of the terminal, and then underground. It brings the county water from upriver and in that building are all the valves to split it off across the passenger yard and on to corporate headquarters."

"Through tunnels?"

"Yes, ma'am! The number one pump sends the flow up to the water tanks atop the station. When both are full, the motor cuts off. The pipes leaving pump two go down through the floor and extend under the ceiling of the lower basement, then beneath Rose Street, and on to the tanks atop the records building at corporate headquarters."

"Is there a tunnel?"

"No, they pass through a narrow concrete culvert under the pavement. This third pump fills the water tower perched atop the bluff overlooking the lower yards. They use a lot of water! This pump switches on about every hour. Now, over on this wall, this huge box with all the levers distributes electric power for the station and concourse!"

"Does it run through tunnels?"

"No. It goes out through wires."

"So, if I crawl through this tunnel, I'll end up in that little brick building?"

"Why would you want to do that? It's easier to get there on foot. Say, aren't you Mr. McNair's girl: the one who goes underground to take pictures?"

"That's me!"

"Holy cow! Wait till I tell the fellows. Through that door is storage, and the freight elevator. It goes to receiving on the first floor and descends to the lower basement. The hand operated

dumbwaiter goes up to the kitchen. I have no idea why it's there. Anything for the kitchen comes off the loading dock."

"Is it big enough to hold a person?"

"Not you; a tight squeeze for her. The freight elevator is easier: just walk in, close the gate, and turn the lever; right is up, left is down. It pops back to middle on its own when the car aligns with the floor."

"Anytime?"

"That's right. The motor is off until you turn the lever all the way. I'll show you."

He gave us a ride down to the lower basement. The elevator motor was quiet compared to the pumps. Wooden crates of assorted sizes filled the vast space. On the north wall adjacent to the stairwell was a metal double door with flush bolts top and bottom. It wasn't on my drawings.

"What's behind the doors?"

"Oh, there used to be steps going down to the lower yards, but we wanted a concrete freight platform that extended to the tracks. Now, the freight department parks a boxcar loaded with everything needed here alongside this. It's small, but better than nothing." On stepping outside, our guide propped open the door. I noticed it had a lockset with only a latch-bolt that engaged when the doors closed. Well, here was an excellent escape route into the inclined plane; but unfortunately, a long way from the Sixth Street Bridge. The officers caught me at half the distance! Ella also thought it was another way to enter the station if our lady pressed a gum eraser into the strike plate. However, if the maintenance men inside remembered to push in both sets of flush bolts, that trick was out. During the rest of the day, we prepared a report of our findings. Disregarding the station watchmen's rounds and officers' patrol, an intruder could enter the station during business hours, hide, and depart any time after closing using the door off the kitchen opening onto the ground floor loading dock, or the double-doors in the second basement opening to the platform in the inclined plane. If the intruder waited until the arrival of the overnight express, exiting through the Baggage Department was easy. The company does not employ many women, but all but us wear white blouses. Those who do not work in the station end up performing errands there at some point. If the 'ghost lady' is moving about the station offices during business hours, a white blouse works well. Dark clothing was more appropriate if she limited her late-night adventures to the terminal grounds. Ella noted that circumventing all the self-locking doors was easy. All one needs is a few wooden wedges. A professional burglar could pick any door lock on the office floors.

Regarding the clockwork, Myrna was confident that there were blinds built into the interlocking rounds and patrol for the station, but an intruder must know where not to be at specific times. Major Durant designed his scheme during the construction of Unity Station when thieves were taking building materials. Once set in motion, there was no longer enough time to steal a load of lumber or copper pipe, and if the thieves managed to elude one patrol, they would encounter another before leaving the terminal. For our lady intruder, if she makes it out of Unity Station, the lower yards patrol will see her in the inclined plane, or the passenger yard patrol are apt to catch her trying to leave by the service road. The trustworthy reports place her in these locations.

With repetition, something so complicated tends to fall out of adjustment. Myrna wanted to examine the watchman's clock disks to see whether they were able to maintain their rounds with precision, but it was a timed consuming task best saved for another day.

About the time we were preparing to return home, Mr. Johnston brought back to our "parlor" a very distraught Miss Lydia Rochelle, a sketch artist who makes her living working in the kitchen

of the Railroad Hotel. She has permission to make drawings in the station and on the concourse. Several of her pen and ink drawings and watercolors hang in the station restaurant. A young brat stole her sketch book and pencil box. While the officers were searching for the boy, Mr. Johnston wanted us to speak with Lydia, hoping we might calm her down enough so he could get a coherent statement. So, our first customer was a victim rather than a crook.

"I'm Myrna, and this is my sister Ella. Like you, I draw, and she likes to pose." I really didn't think she liked to pose, but all the drawing students preferred her over anybody willing to be the model. "Did you lose many drawings?"

"No, it was a new book! I saved up for it, and my pencils are gone, too!" I had an instant cure for that. The sketchpad I used for Mr. McNair's "archaeology" was in the records room. I started to draw the old bridge pier at Fourth Street but discover the Haynes Tomb before getting far along. The only drawings I made were engineering diagrams on vellum. I gave her my pad and pencil box. After a moment of embarrassment, her anxiety melted away.

"Whether or not the officers find your sketchbook, you can keep this. I have another, and it still has plenty of sheets left. Are you ready to speak with Captain Johnston?"

Throughout our exchange, Ella smiled and held her hand. The officers found her new sketchbook abandoned in a waiting room, the first sheet, being ordinary paper, defaced with mindless doodles; and nearby, a bundle of drawing pencils. The culprit was long gone. All he kept was the wooden cigar box Lydia used for her drawing supplies. We arrived home at a quarter past six, five minutes ahead of Granddaddy James. Mrs. Keane was livid!

Frank and Louis are joining us for breakfast and dinner in addition to accompanying us on the walk to and from work. We spend a few hours together in the basement workshop assembling our signal light. On Saturday evening after Mrs. Keane leaves, Myrna and I plan to cook our fried chicken. This is the first evening the boys are joining us for the watch. Looking back through station police daily logs, all the credible sightings of the "ghost" occurred on Fridays and Sundays. This includes the early morning hours after the station closes, dusk, and first light. We cannot determine whether she is entering or leaving the terminal.

Sergeant Frier of the nightshift lower yards patrol promised to look for our signal light when we are ready to test it.

Despite the weaknesses we found, Major Durant is not convinced that an intruder can move about the station, evading the nightwatchmen and patrol the entire night. I recommended that we try it. He agreed. Next week, we along with Captain Johnston are assign to the nightshift.

Neither one of us ever worked at night, so there is some novelty in it. We would be a free-roaming *détachement* whose purpose is to identify the blinds in the rigidly structured station patrol. When an officer discovers us, he proclaims "Stop, I see you!" He then records the place and time, and then we continue until our next encounter. If a watchman sees us, the rule is different. He must report his sighting to the office by telephone – ha-ha-ha! All the hallways and passageways in the station remain well-lit overnight, so the exercise is safe. Nevertheless, he wanted the captain to accompany us. That's funny! I can only imagine the three of us hiding in a tiny lavatory. The object of this experiment was to move about the station unseen, insomuch as it was possible. The Major thought telling the officers on duty that we were scouting out new locations for telephone call boxes and watchman's key stations would prevent our inquiry from devolving into a hide-and-

seek match. That wasn't entirely untrue since he considered those improvements part of any solution if we found blinds in the rounds. In any case, it sounded scientific.

Uncle Roscoe determined that the 'ghost' fit in one of four pigeonholes: thief, spy, saboteur, or lunatic. He scratched thief and saboteur. If spy, she makes return visits to the upper yards or station to glean information. After examining the paperwork of the yardmaster, he couldn't determine why a spy would repeatedly brave capture to have it. The Transportation Department in the station offices handles an abundance of potential intelligence pertaining to the entire railroad, chiefly freight train manifests and bills of lading. When lumped together, the records were a detailed portrait of commerce and industry for a vast region. However, a spy dropping in for a brief game of weekend plundering must be interested in a particular freight train transporting a particular shipment in a particular car from a particular origin to a particular destination.

Hmm, I think he was too quick to remove the thief pigeonhole. Our Fräulein Geisterdame might spy for a gang of criminals. Then again, the whole of our analysis might be the result of seeing leprechauns out of the corner of our eyes: she might be the lunatic everybody thought in the beginning. Ella, always the pragmatist, envisions the "ghost" intruder stealing company forms to commit fraud.

The whole "ghost" affair promotes a general mania which draws its fuel from the state of the world without. We are not in the war [yet], but the gentlemen are beginning to behave as though the terminal is a fortress. Drawing upon Myrna's daydreaming about a saboteur bringing down the retaining wall for the inclined plane, the otherwise levelheaded Edmund McNair decided to press forward with his concrete walls after calculating that several powerful charges buried ten feet down would collapse the old stone walls. Uncle Roscoe is determined to discover what crucial intelligence the company has which would draw repeated visits from a spy ring. Yes, he cannot imagine the lady's successful incursions without help from multiple agents. They're everywhere! By contrast, the Major is convinced that an intruder can break into Unity Station, but the thoroughness of his patrol deters such an attempt. Railroads by their nature operate out in the open and accessible to the public so any attempt to make the terminal impregnable was detrimental to business. Mr. Levesque regards anxieties over espionage as pure nonsense since any useful intelligence about the movements of trains spoils within days. Furthermore, he thought the commerce of the line was not exceptional. If anything, a criminal gang was planning to rob valuable shipments when the boxcars staged for transport in various yards are vulnerable. That seemed plausible but why had the robbery not taken place after weeks of intrusions? I am inclined to think the woman acts alone, enters the station during business hours, and steals something like blank tickets, baggage receipt pads, purchase order forms, company checks, and payroll forms, all useful in perpetrating fraud on a small scale that might go unnoticed until an audit. It is also possible that the lady is making key impressions to enable her pillaging and escape. In this case, her chances can improve with repeat visits: she seeks out one item in a specific office for which she has the key, and then leaves when there is an opening. Our gentlemen are of the opinion that a burglar capable of such feats would rob one of the safes. They cannot imagine a subtle, prolonged swindle.

Collaborating with the Smart Boys

Frank and Louis have spent every evening here since Thursday working on our signal light. Presently, I am taking a break from the debates to refresh my mind. So far, they have a piece of frosted glass, a reflector, and a Fresnel lens mounted in a metal housing on a stand. We tried several types of electric lamps, some requisitioned from company inventory, a carbide automobile

light – no – burning magnesium – no! – a Drummond light – no! – the gentlemen want to build a carbon arc lamp – I don't know. The problem, according to Myrna, is the inverse square law, or for anybody else, our bright light doesn't look so bright at a distance, so they're trying to turn the belvedere into a light house. It's my fault. Sergeant Frier is recording our progress during his patrol. Some of our electric lamps are visible in the upper reaches of the passenger yard and any point in the dark area above, extending so far as the passenger switching tower, that is, if you're looking for it. A nightwatchman on the north side of the terminal saw our light when he was half-way to the upper yards. Yet, the bright wash from the multitude of large bulbs illuminating the station and concourse pale ours. Some of the other methods we've tried outside give off light with blinding intensity, but they involve burning something and that will not do inside the house, particularly in the close confines of the belvedere. Myrna electrically ignited some of her photographic flash powder behind the house, a mite too much, startling Mrs. Keane, but provided Mr. Levesque and the McNair boys with excellent entertainment. After abandoning the carbon arc, they'll return to electric lights. One of the many complications with a brilliant beam is it will also draw the attention of our lady intruder. Once again, the engineers are trying to solve the wrong problem. We have enough light. Sergeant Frier and his colleagues must remain attentive. That aside, the four of us are having fun and Mr. Levesque enjoys having the boys around.

Imperfect gears

On intuition, Myrna undertook an examination of the station nightwatchmen's paper clock disks for a period encompassing two weeks. She noticed they started their shifts in perfect concordance with the clockwork scheme, but gradually the gears ceased to align. It only took a few minutes of getting behind for a nightwatchman to miss the grand entry of the officers. Speeding up a round left a bigger gap between the others. I don't think the officer in charge of the watchmen noticed. Myrna assembled a revised chart of times and locations for moving unseen. I grew more confident in her strategy but realized that we still had not discovered good hiding places.

For the next few days, Myrna is taking an electrical course in the Engineering Department so further preparations for our exercise must wait.

During the summer of 1913, I apprenticed with Mr. Garington, the company locksmith. He was busy installing door locks for the offices in Unity Station. Though the public area on the first two floors opened a year earlier, finishing work continued on six floors of offices. Though I didn't think twice about it at the time, we refurbished surplus door locks to install, some of them three-tumbler single-bolt night latches. Why? I decided to pay the gentleman a visit.

"Good afternoon, Miss Levesque! Are you still keeping up with your locksmithing studies?"

"When I can but my sister enjoys reading my books. Anything mechanical interests her – she even has her own basement workshop."

"I hear everything about her from the men. Where does she keep Mr. Slithers?"

"He was getting a bit feisty, so we put him back in the river. [Ella!] The purpose of my visit is asking you about all those refurbished door locks we installed in the station offices."

"During the 1900 expansion of corporate headquarters we replaced all the earlier locks and then kept the ones we took out in storage. Most date from the 1880s; but the company doesn't like throwing away hardware, some came from the joint station in the upper yards that was torn down after the first part of the administration building at headquarters was completed; and keeping with our tradition of cutting corners, some in the joint station were salvaged from the doors in the 1850s

station at the long-gone steamboat landing, now filled-in to make the lower yards and wharves. As usual, the Board of Directors became nervous when Unity Station was running over budget so first, they hurried along the opening of the lower floors to bring in revenue and then somebody in administration thought using our surplus door locks was a brilliant way to cut costs to get the offices up and going. Mr. McNair agreed providing that the company installed new door locks at the first opportune moment. That usually means when there is a problem. If you have the time, we can rummage through storage. In addition to a sampling of all the obsolete door locks use in the station, we keep antique padlocks, cabinet locks, and anything else opened with a key. You might as well use them in your study. Bring your sister around, and we'll get her started with locksmithing."

Well, that is a wonderful way to cut costs! Install obsolete door locks and consume manhours employing five officers to compensate for the deficiency in security.

The Major scheduled us for a week of nightshift beginning June 12. The arrangement did not enthuse Captain Johnston, but he was curious to see whether we could remain hidden after closing. Upon arriving home in the company of Frank and Louis, we announce to Mrs. Keane that we were nightshift workers for the following week. She sent her husband to the hardware store to buy lunch pails for us. After I told her that we needed to have dinner in the afternoon, she threw up her hands and turned away. During our absence, the boys will assume our station in the belvedere Friday and Sunday evening. Their electric light works fine. Whether or not the officers keep an eye out for it, we shall.

Friday, June 9, 1916. After Unity Station closed at half-past midnight, Major Durant instructed Captain Johnston to have us meet with Sergeant Butterfield and his officers before they began their patrol of the station. Without revealing the true purpose of the assignment, the Captain told the men that our task was roaming about the station recording the time it took to cover varying distances in preparation of revising the rounds. Starting Monday, for a few days, we must accompany the officers and watchmen while they are performing their duties. Early Thursday morning, Myrna, Captain Johnston, and I, using our timetables and watches, must evade the station officers and watchmen after closing, and if possible, complete the task by making our way to the exterior of the building between daybreak and the arrival of the overnight express, not earlier or later. When our paths intersect those of an officer on patrol, he announces "Stop, I see you!" and then records the location and time. To test the effectiveness of the callboxes, when the watchmen see us, they must report the time and location immediately to the shift supervisor using the nearest telephone. Captain Johnston shall accompany us during our wanderings in the station to observe our methods and ensure that we do not engage in overt trickery. Over the course of the shift, we ascend to the eighth floor, descend to the lobby, and then leave by one of the several ways given in our report. The undertaking is daunting: hide-and-seek – another Myrna type of game. However, we play teamed, unable to split up: two women together with a middle-aged man in tow, moving about freely up against eight men set upon rigid paths and timetables. That might be an even match. She was confident that her calculations favored us.

The match (June 12-14)

It is difficult to adjust to working overnight. Upon arriving home, we must change because Mr. Levesque has Frank and Louis dropping by for breakfast. After the menfolk leave for work

together, Mrs. Keane and her crew of hirelings set to work. The commotion rivals the din outside, still both of us sleep until the afternoon. Myrna carried the chaise lounge down to her workshop because it is dark and cool. I prefer sleeping in my room with the electric fan at my bed. Its steady roar covering the aggravating divertimento of stir outside my door. Our midafternoon meal is the last hot one until breakfast next morning.

At work, Captain Johnston took us along on all the patrols in the terminal, so I imagine that we walked many miles thus far. All the while, we took notes and recorded time to give the officers the impression that we were looking for new sites for telephone callboxes. Myrna was doing so in earnest. He made a special effort to introduce us to all the officers and watchmen emphasizing that we are "the Levesque sisters, future owners of the company." That grabbed their attention. However, upon realizing Myrna was "The Girl," satisfaction beamed from their faces. They wanted to hear about the "cast-iron coffins" she discovered in the Haynes tomb. She told them that there was a mix up. It was sacks of laundry in the tombs and cast-iron fittings in the cisterns. [The fellows from the lower yards helping with the demolition work spread the rumor that I found sacks of bank notes from a robbery which took place during the 1850s. Now, nobody believes me when I tell them otherwise.] So, did she really beat the lower yards patrol in another foot race? [The race took place on McNair's road on the afternoon of Saturday, June 10, 1916. None of the officers could run the entire five blocks.] Yes, that was fact, and she could also shuffle decks of cards one-handed in both hands simultaneously, a feat she was prepared to demonstrate. Astounding!

Frank and Louis are joining Granddaddy James for dinner and keeping him company until nine o'clock, but I imagine they are staying later. We commence our first match of hide-and-seek early Thursday morning. Beginning Thursday evening after dinner, the boys will start their watch in the belvedere and stay until the arrival of the evening express at midnight. They promised to keep a log, including location and time if anything happens. Our week of nightshift ends Saturday morning.

Myrna is napping on the bench as we await the arrival of the evening express. Our match early this morning went well. Having Captain Johnston along on our wanderings did not slow us down. Upon entering the service passageway from the lobby after the evening express arrived, we immediately continued up to the door leading to the north stairwell. Using Myrna's tables, we passed through the third floor to the south stairwell while the two nightwatchmen paced the seventh and fourth floors respectively. Moving upward in the opposite direction of their rounds, we arrived at the boardroom on the eighth floor before the two station police officers commenced their patrol. Thereafter, descending was more difficult. The two officers begin at opposite stairwells, pass each other on a floor, ascend to the next floor, passing again in reverse directions. All the while, the watchmen are descending. They meet on floors four and seven, twice during a complete patrol by the officers. Myrna timed our descent to coincide with the moment the officers meet a watchman at the center of their designated floor. If the other watchman is on time, he will also be at the center of his floor. At three o'clock, we made our way downstairs unnoticed to the balcony overlooking the first-floor lobby. According to Myrna's tables, Watchman Hunt was patrolling the basement for the next half-hour. We had a clear opening. Once the station officer in the lobby went to check the waiting rooms, we crept downstairs and made our way across the lobby to the service passageway leading to the employee entrance on the east side of the building. To avoid detection by the same officer continuing his patrol through this hall we stepped out onto the loading dock, placing Myrna's notebook between the door and its frame to prevent it from

locking. At this point, we encountered Sergeant Frier of the lower yards patrol. Captain Johnston decided that we accomplished enough during that shift, so he brought us back to the office. Not bad for a first try. Eighteen hours later, our second hide-and-seek match with the station patrol is due to commence soon.

Thursday evening, ten minutes before midnight, Captain Johnston took us out to the concourse to meet with sergeants Butterfield and Frier. The southbound evening express was due to arrive, and passengers were boarding the northbound overnight. After the building closed for the evening, he wanted Sergeant Butterfield to have his patrol assemble in the lobby before beginning their first round. All the gentlemen knew about our “measuring” earlier in the week, so none of it came as a surprise. Myrna and I wore our timepieces on long guard chains, and we carried notebooks so there was little doubt what we were doing: something unnecessary. The Captain sent us on into the station to mill about while he conferred with the sergeants.

Friday, our adventure began at five-past midnight. When the express arrived at Unity Station, we mingled with the passengers anxious to receive their baggage and make their way to a soft bed whether at home or in a hotel. Adding to the rush of humanity were those waiting to receive the haggard travelers and transport them to comfortable quarters. It takes about a half-hour for the station to clear. Where were the station police? We saw an officer at the main entrance, keys in hand ready to lock up; another, stationed in the lobby, and a third stood ready to close off the concourse. Where were the other two? No doubt they were checking the waiting rooms. Myrna saw a chance opening and seized the opportunity, dragging me along. A man pushing a cart of baggage lost his footing sending the cart into a half-spin. It grazed the counter, and a stack of luggage toppled off. We used the distraction to enter the employee passageway leading to the Passenger Service department, still open, and dashed up the steps, running westward past the locked corridor behind the offices on the second floor, then up the next flight of steps, finally reaching the service passageway with the electrician’s door to the catwalks. There we waited beside the door leading to the third-floor level of the north stairwell. As planned, Captain Johnston was meeting us there after the officers locked up the building for the night. Behind the door, we heard some movement. Myrna wanted to take a peek. Thinking it might be a watchman, I stopped her. We waited for the Captain until it was time to begin our ascent, but he didn’t come.

We passed through the door opening onto the stairwell landing of the third floor. Once the door closed behind us, it locked. We took a gamble, entering the third-floor hallway. It was then a quarter of one. Soon, the nightwatchman would complete his rounds on the fourth, and descend to the third. The other nightwatchman was ready to begin rounds on the sixth. We took refuge in a lavatory to wait. While inside, we heard soft footsteps outside the door. Who was that? The one from which we entered creaked, and then heavy footsteps came from the opposite end of the hall. We blundered into a tight corner. There was an officer lurking about on this floor!

Twenty minutes later, I made a quick survey of the hall with my hand mirror, and then we crept to the lobby, pause for another glimpse around the corner, and left by the door (South Stairwell) opposite from whence we came. We ascended the steps gingerly. On passing the sixth-floor landing, I heard footsteps far below. No fair: the gentlemen abandoned their rounds and were searching for us!

On reaching the hallway on the seventh floor, we came upon Captain Johnston. It was he who was searching for us, but who was that coming up from below? At that moment, Nightwatchman Moss entered, speaking incoherently about something taking place downstairs on the third floor.

The Captain used the telephone call box to tell the operator to connect him to the one there. Listening intently in the south stairwell, I heard a commotion down below: men's voices, and then the slamming of a door. Myrna stepped out into the north stairwell and heard the shrill tones of an officer's pea whistle. What was going on down there? Captain Johnston dropped the receiver of the telephone and told us to stay put while he investigated. After ten minutes, Watchman Lloyd arrived with orders to escort us downstairs.

On viewing the pandemonium taking place in the first-floor lobby from the grand staircase we realized something was amiss. Captain Johnston and several men from the lower yards patrol were having a heated exchange.

"Your men say the signal light? What signal light? Where is the station patrol?" Signal light? The boys saw the lady! I called out to Sergeant Frier, but before we could get a word in, the stairwell door flung open and Sergeant Butterfield race past us to the marble railing overlooking the lobby. Captain Johnston was having a conniption! "Where are your men? Frier says the "ghost" is out on the walkway to the annex."

"I was out there with Paxton just a moment ago. She's not there."

"How?"

"I don't know! That's a thirty-foot drop! Somebody must have left the door open on the annex side."

"Never mind, Frier has men heading over there. What's going on here?"

"One of my men blew his whistle. Also, there's a telephone dangling from the box on seven and there was one ringing on three. Officer Paxton saw the lady leaving out the door to the north stairwell when he came to answer it, and then Mr. Moss found a light on in the Manifest Division. He is sure that all the lights were off at closing.

"Anything missing?"

"Not that he could tell."

"Don't worry about that! Block the door to the annex. We don't want that wildcat coming back in or if you happen to be wrong, getting out. Sergeant Frier, get to work; and don't come back to me with ghost stories. Bring her!"

It was coming up on three o'clock. It took about twenty minutes before Sergeant Butterfield was able to assure Captain Johnston that the building was secure; at which point, the Captain told us to remain in the lobby with Officer Atchison until he returned for us. General mayhem was in full swing outside. Upon returning to the office later, we discovered that Sergeant Frier and his entire patrol pursued the "ghost" into the upper yards. The patrol in the passenger yard let her slip past. At five o'clock, Major Durant arrived to establish order, which happen spontaneously after the lady made another foolhardy escape by taking a ride on a freight train passing down through the inclined plane. Mr. Hennessy joined the conference of bewildered men before the end of the shift. Sergeants Butterfield and Frier stayed on to prepare their reports for Captain Johnston. In the meanwhile, Sergeant Quince volunteered to accompany the plumbers into the station pipe tunnels to make sure an intruder wasn't hiding inside. Mr. Hennessy decided to call a meeting in his office at three that afternoon to discuss what he termed "a complete failure of communication and command." He expected both of us to be there.

What our "smart boys" saw

Upon arriving home this morning, we found Frank and Louis napping in the downstairs parlor, both bedraggled and reeking of cigar smoke. Upon catching a glimpse of us they immediately

became animated. Having started their watch in the belvedere at nine o'clock last evening, neither one expected to see anything and planned to go home at one. Repeatedly they pointed the telescope throughout the terminal but found the light too dim to see anything distinguishable beyond the areas illuminated by the widely spaced electric lights. In the end, they limited their surveillance to the brightly lit station and concourse. Before midnight, Frank noticed a woman in white stepping out of the station onto the overhead walkway leading to the annex – it is well-lit. She lingered there until a quarter past twelve. He noticed a long slice of light shining at the door leading into the station offices. This suggested something prevented it from closing. When the woman bent down to retrieve an object before returning inside, he was sure of it. Not more than ten minutes later, she came out again, placing her block at the bottom of the door, and like before, removed it upon going inside a few minutes later. The timing closely matched when we heard sounds behind the door to the third-floor stairwell landing.

At this point, he and Louis debated on whether to turn on the light. Both knew that after six, nobody worked in the station offices. Certainly, anybody from the Transportation Department working overnight in the annex needing something from across the way would use a key. Even so, the boys decided to call the department supervisor in the annex. It took a while to get through, but the gentleman informed them that the only ladies on duty in the building were those in the telephone and telegraph department and the night nurse in the terminal infirmary. None had any reason to leave their posts and venture over to the station offices. He then told the boys that he would send one of the watchmen to check the door. Frank and Louis agreed to turn on their light, and then telephone the station police. With their first two attempts, nobody answered. On their third try, the officer said the patrols already knew about a woman intruder in the station. He then quizzed Frank about where he was in the terminal. After telling the officer he was watching through a telescope, the call ended abruptly. Louis witnessed a rush of movement through the passenger yard before three, and both tried to make sense of shadowy movements in the classification yard. Eventually, Frank made another call to the station police office, this time asking to speak with Captain Johnston. After waiting a few minutes, the connection went dead. When Frank returned to the belvedere, Louis told him that workers from the shops in the upper yards were milling about watching a hubbub of some sort, but it was too dark to tell. About daybreak, he saw station police officers running back towards the station through the inclined plane minutes after the last freight train passed. At daybreak, the boys went downstairs to make coffee but Mrs. Keane, who just arrived, told them to stay out of the kitchen.

Mr. Levesque remarked upon coming downstairs for breakfast that all four of us looked as though we stumbled in after attending a New Year's Eve party. Regretfully, that wasn't in our immediate plans. After informing him of the lady's latest antics, he calmly told us to sit down to our meal and then retire for the remainder of the morning. He expected somebody would telephone him at the appropriate time. Until then, other business required his attention. Reflecting upon this, it was the sensible response: the gentlemen who complicate our lives had yet to sort through the wreckage of their own grand designs. On the bright side, Captain Johnston's use of the telephone box inadvertently exposed our "ghost" as a burglar.

After thanking our steadfast "smart boys" for maintaining their watch, Myrna and I went to our respective nooks to rest. I dropped atop the covers after removing my boots and immediately fell asleep without shedding my dress. During our slumber, Uncle Roscoe met with Mr. Deschamps to determine whether anything in his department was out of place. There was one thing: the clerk working Friday morning noticed that somebody removed the passenger train files just completed from records and left it on the desk of Mr. Collier, the manager for freight on the Central line. Mr.

Deschamps considered the breach of protocol serious! This happened to be the desk where Nightwatchman Moss found the electric lamp burning. Uncle Roscoe remained cautious.

Monday, after Myrna showed Major Durant her timetables from our two attempts at evading detection, he finally admitted that she discovered weaknesses in his clockwork. Intuitively, he knew it, and knew that our girl previously exploited them for her adventures in posted areas. What else explains his eagerness to cast her in these exercises? It is not often that a man so readily admits the fallibility of his ingenious designs. Respectfully, she offered several improvements to the existing rounds to cover the blinds. My uncle, however, saw little need to revise the scheme, he placed fault on the officers: performing their routine patrols in the station at night led them to become complacent. They didn't have a strategy for addressing a threat other than acting as a leaderless mob. The lower yards patrol was worse. They allowed the intruder to reach the classification yard where the maze of cars offered limitless chances for evasion. Lacking a telephone in the box mid-way to the upper yards was a serious impediment, but the officers did not use telephones effectively when they were available. Both the station police and watchmen needed training in the use of telephones. Myrna beamed! He also thought Mr. McNair needed to add more of them. At this point, I could see the root problem: the premature opening of the station building. After four years, we are only now feeling the consequences of work deferred and shortcuts taken.

I agreed with Myrna's suggestions but also supported all Uncle Roscoe's plans for limiting hiding places and points of egression in the station. Also, the terminal needed more telephone boxes and alarm bells to alert officers patrolling the grounds. As for the officers, I thought they performed well in their roles as constables yet lacked the training and intuition to thwart a master criminal. I reiterated my recommendation for more training. He didn't think it was practical; however, he could arrange special training for me next summer. I proceeded to present my argument for replacing the obsolete door locks adding that while all of us know the "ghost" has exceptional stamina and acrobatic precision, her skills in burglary appeared to be finely honed. I suspected her education in this dubious craft included picking locks and making key impressions. While her breaking into the Manifest Division might be doubtful, escaping from the annex walkway was only possible if she picked or otherwise temporarily defeated the lock on the annex door. Since there isn't a reason why anybody needs to pass from the annex to the station after hours both doors need three-bolt mortise locks operating with a two-key system making it impossible to open from the outside after the watchmen locked them from the inside. Furthermore, I thought the padlocks for the third-floor electrician's passageway, pipe tunnel grill, and second basement double-door should be the five-lever type. Mr. Buchanan joined the discussion. He thought administration should enforce its standards for employee dress: the office girls need to wear their company jackets and hats when performing their duties outside their respective offices, and that also applies to the men, too, regardless of the season. Yet, it was a personnel problem which the Legal Department could not address. He mentioned that he was working on a joint agreement with Sheriff Smallwood to collaborate on investigations of common interest which might prove beneficial in the future.

Finally, Myrna proposed we test various door locks for effectiveness, particularly measuring the amount of time required to defeat them. The longer a burglar takes to overcome multiple obstacles the chance of the clockwork stopping her or him increases. Uncle Roscoe liked it! Anything scientific delights him. We must work with the locksmith to obtain the test results immediately. At least, I have working examples of the obsolete sets at home for making a comparison. For the time being, the Major thought I should confer with Mr. Garrington about the

new locks, and we should prepare a collaborative report. Other than that, I must resume my regular duties. My uncle is sending Myrna to Mr. Skinner for a few days.

This evening, Ella showed me a new door lock Mr. Garrington is considering for the overhead walkway doors. It has two keys: one opens the lock from both sides of the door; the second has its own keyhole on the inside only and operates the deadbolt. Once the latter is turned a slide covers the keyhole on the outside of the door so no key or lockpick can be inserted. Excellent! We took it apart. It has two sets of tumblers, both having three each. After this fascinating lesson, Ella brought out something special for me.

Surprise! Ella decided to show me how to escape from a real pair of English-style screw key handcuffs. They had a silvery finish but looked old; not adjustable for ladies; the cuffs were lady-size, specifically medium-size which meant my size. The design is time-honored and simple, being commonplace in some countries throughout the world. After showing me how the screw key worked, Ella snapped them on my wrists and then told me to find something in my workshop to open them. All I had to do was lift the threaded bolt inside the keyhole. It turned out not to be that easy: a strong spring kept the cuff fastened, and the space between the threaded bolt and its housing was narrow.

“So? Do you have any ideas?” I laughed. “It looks like you’ll be at it for a while, so I’ll return in the morning either to congratulate you or unlock them. Good luck.” Uh-huh, she was leaving me locked up. No hurry now: I had the whole night to figure out how to use my tools inconvenienced. I spent a long time searching through my inventory of hardware to find something of the right size to fit the keyhole. Some of it looked promising, but the thought that the solution was simpler nagged at me. Within a half-hour, my workbench contained everything that might work but there was no clear starting point. I stretched out on the chaise lounge and studied the hardware on my wrists carefully. My classmates at college deem most of my stories wildly embellished but they might find my curious bent towards getting myself into binds with handcuffs completely plausible – ha-ha-ha! This had to be easy.

Returning to my predicament, I began by selecting a two-and-a-half-inch piece of tubing that was once a segment salvaged from something – everything discarded is useful sometimes. The metal seemed to be the right thickness and the tube fit the keyhole. After tapping an inch of thread inside, I screwed it into my right cuff and pull the end with pliers. It opened. My first handcuff escape. I was excited! You only need to open one. Still, removing the pair entirely completes the challenge. After about an hour and a half, most of the time spent thinking, I was able to place the antiques on my workbench and turn out the light.

Thursday, June 22, 1916. Mr. Buchanan doubted whether the “ghost” intruder would attempt to break into the station again. While we can only speculate about her objectives, recently proposed improvements present a formidable obstacle to her attempts to achieve it employing the same methods. Therefore, he asked Uncle Roscoe to press Mr. Garrington and I for an immediate decision concerning the locks forgoing unnecessary testing. He thought information provided by the manufacturers was sufficient. We recommended separate inside locking deadbolts with paracentric keyways for the second-floor stairwell doors and the station and annex doors to the overhead walkway. The locks on the doors entering the stairwells on the first floor presently installed are the three-bolt five-tumbler mortise locks Mr. McNair recommended in his plans, so they remain. The new passageway locks are quality two-bolt four-tumbler knob mortise locks, each keyed differently and we recommended the same for the main doors to the divisional offices. The rooms housing records have two-bolt locks with paracentric keyways. The padlocks for the pipe

grill and second basement double-doors are five-lever. Mr. Buchanan remarked that my ability to make an informed decision quickly following executive protocol demonstrated my fitness for administration. Mr. McNair signed off on our recommendations.

Myrna's heroics

Thursday morning, while on her way to Mr. Skinner's office to do drafting, Myrna rescued a mechanic who was repairing a chute on the coaling station. The accident happened before her eyes! The chute unexpectedly opened and the scaffold on which the man was standing gave way in the middle. He fell through the hole to the tracks before its platform came down over him, all the while coal continued to pour down. Myrna and another mechanic rushed in to pull the injured fellow to safety before the stream of coal crushed the platform of the scaffold down upon him. Other men came with lumber, shovels, and sheets of metal, all laboring to divert the torrent of coal. Myrna, pummeled by chunks, receiving bruises on her shoulders and back, cleared away coal with her hands as her brave partner leveraged up the platform with a post. The bunker above the bay soon emptied. Having been unusable for a week due to the damaged chute, attendants of the coaling station removed most of the coal from its bunker. Even so, a quarter of a tender load remained. Myrna helped the man work his way free of the obstructions while others shoveled and pried. After the mechanic was pulled to safety, [He had a broken leg, dislocated shoulder, and bruises but the doctor from the infirmary said he would mend.] Myrna thanked all the men, walked home to bathe, and changed into a fresh uniform. [Really?]

Mrs. Keane threw a fit! She told me to disrobe in the laundry room and wrap up in a dirty bed sheet before entering the house through the kitchen. Upon seeing me, the cook dropped her mixing bowl. Coal dust powdered my wild hair, I had a large "goose egg" on my forehead and lost the left lens of my glasses. No matter: a girl like me has spares. Following a vigorous scrubbing and lengthy soak, I tried to look pretty again but it wasn't working. Ella came home to check on me after hearing about my adventure. She rubbed down my back with liniment, removed the bottle of brandy from her lockbox, and then we had a little celebration. Once Ella telephoned Mr. Hennessy to assure him that I was fine, just sore all over, we spent the entire afternoon attempting to dress for dinner. Drink slowed us down. *[I found the cigar Frank gave Myrna and smoked it. Upon coming downstairs, Mrs. Keane sent us into the back yard to have dinner because we smelled like working men.]* After our tidy oppressor left for the evening, Frank and Louis dropped by to hear my story. *[Mr. Levesque brought out a bottle of his prized Scotch whiskey.]* The five of us had a grand time! *[It was getting late. The gentlemen helped us into the downstairs parlor. That was far enough. I told them that we might crawl up to our bedrooms if we felt up to it.]* The next morning, we woke up on the parlor floor, our heads pounding. Granddaddy James told us to escape to our rooms before Mrs. Keane arrived. The cook, Mrs. Beech, asked whether we needed some coffee. Ella took the entire pot. Needless to say, we had the day off – ha-ha-ha!

Lydia's drawing

Mr. Hennessy stopped by to check on me. During our recovery, he spoke with Sheriff Smallwood, but the latter said he already had enough deputies patrolling the railroad district and North Docks. Still, he intended to tell his deputies to be on the lookout for a tall woman dressed in a white blouse strolling the district during the wee hours. They were apt to take notice of folks out that late regardless of what they were wearing. Still, he needed a better description. Being out at night isn't a crime. If our officers couldn't supply evidence connecting whatever happened in the

terminal to whoever his deputies brought in, there wasn't a case. Mr. Hennessy then put to the test the various company employees who claimed to have seen the "ghost lady" in Unity Station. In interviewing each, he employed Lydia Rochelle to assist by making sketches from their descriptions. In the end, it was she who had a finished watercolor in her book that closely matched the most credible descriptions. Those witnesses picked that one from a selection of three watercolors, all ladies she sketched while sitting in the station. It helped a little, giving the officers something better to work with than a tall woman dressed in a white blouse. Lydia's watercolor depicts a lady with striking features, definitely determined, with deep auburn hair. The hair and expression are what attracted her attention. It is an interesting face!

Feeling that Fräulein Geisterdame might be working for a foreign government or professional criminals, Granddaddy James telephoned his friend in Washington to discuss our concerns. He recommended that the company hire Charles M. Creswell, a top-notch expert in organized criminal activities throughout the country, especially those targeting essential industries. Well, it couldn't hurt to try.

Uncle Roscoe telephoned Mr. Creswell. The latter suspected the weeks-long infiltration of station offices was preparatory. If the lady was masquerading as an office girl and making key impressions, it is not outside the realm of possibilities that she also had forged company papers or subverted our security through legitimate employment. Mr. Creswell planned a trip in the near future and must stop over at Port Unity for a few hours. He had time for a meeting providing the company contract his services. In the meanwhile, he would check his files for female professional burglars.

This morning, Mr. Hennessy called me into his office to ask about my injuries. With the exception of my bandaged forehead, I was properly attired and ready to go back to work.

"How is your head?"

"The swelling is down so it's a nice shade of purplish-blue. Mr. McNair shook his head when I lifted up the bandage. 'Think this is pretty? You ought to see the fellow.' Ha-ha-ha! Well, not the real fellow. How is he?"

"Mr. Bradley will be out of work for a while."

"Can't we use him somewhere else?"

"Yes. It's the foreman who sent him to work under the chute who must look for another job. The mechanic who assisted you is taking over his position. His name is Mat Kernan. Perchance, did you read this morning's *Messenger*?" Oops! Here we go! 'Painful accident at Unity Terminal.' He cleared his throat. Uh-huh, I'm in trouble. 'Mechanics from the company shops report that when the scaffolding collapsed under Mr. Charles Bradley, Mr. Kernan, and a tall athletic young lady from the office of the locomotive shop known as "The Girl" rushed to rescue the injured man before tons of coal buried him alive. Mr. Kernan wedged a heavy timber under the wreckage of the platform pinning Mr. Bradley down and *The Girl* pulled him free at significant risk to her life.' What do you think of that?"

"Half a dozen fellows were helping; and after the weight was off his leg, it took a jiffy to drag him out. Besides, there was only a quarter-tender load above. That's, hmm, right, a lot of weight but it wasn't coming all at once." Mr. Hennessy shook his head and then continued reading.

"There's more. 'Who is *The Girl* celebrated by railroad men throughout the terminal? Nobody was willing to tell us. However, it is rumored that she has a pet alligator.' Pet alligator?"

"I do not!"

“Do you want to tell the *Messenger* that?”

“No, sir! Where would I keep him? Besides, the Major is giving us good hunting dogs after we graduate from college. Drats!” Mr. Hennessy removed a piece of paper from his desk.

“This is much better: ‘Mr. Mat Kernan, recently appointed foreman of the passenger yard machine shop, and Miss Myrna Eloise Levesque, granddaughter of Superintendent James Edward Levesque, Sr., rescued mechanic Charles Bradley after an obstructed chute in the coaling station he was repairing unexpectedly opened, collapsing the scaffold on which he was standing and eventually trapping him under a pile of coal. Miss Levesque and Mr. Kernan, joined by other company employees, quickly removed Mr. Bradley from the debris. In response to the article in a previous number of the *Messenger*, we submit the following clarification: Miss Levesque works in the office of Roscoe R. Hennessy, Chief Inspector of Railroad Detectives and Station Police. A gracious lady much admired for her drafting skills and baking cookies...’ and so forth. I’ll add ‘While Miss Levesque does not have a pet alligator, she is looking forward to getting a-’ What kind of dog is the Major giving you?”

“A woolly hundred-pound white sled-dog with a loud bark and sharp teeth.”

“Right; that’s definitely a cocker spaniel. ‘... getting a cocker spaniel upon graduating college.’ There you have it: the same song, note for note, played on a harp rather than a calliope. To get away doing what you are naturally inclined to do all you need is some polishing and a skillful publicist.”

“Excellent, sir!”

The joint agreement

Today, Mr. Buchanan had me sign legal documents relating to the department’s agreement to cooperate with Sheriff Smallwood on investigations of common interest. Though Major Durant is liaison, Uncle Roscoe thought having me along to observe might prove to be of some value eventually.

Rethinking

While playing cards, my thoughts drifted towards our assumptions, especially considering whether Fräulein Geisterdame is really intent upon breaking into the Manifest Division. I am now convinced she entered the station from the walkway connecting to the annex. The latter is busy overnight, but it has only a single watchman on duty. If the lady can hide in plain view during business hours, no doubt she has a strategy for moving about in the annex. Her perplexing escape from the walkway is not so magical: she had a key to the annex side. As for the station door on the opposite end, I have my doubts. I imagine she picked the lock, using a block to keep it from closing. So, what is the lady after? On my reexamination of Mr. McNair’s model, I noticed that the accounting office of the Ticket Department is directly below the central office of the Transportation Division. There, the manager locks the weekly revenue for ticket sales in a safe until armed guards deliver it to the bank Monday morning. Access to this office is through an employee corridor with doors opening onto the second-floor balcony overlooking the main lobby. Additionally, the door locks have alarm bells like those in a safety deposit room; and the door has a buzzer and peephole for the attendant on duty while the station is open. The patrol checks the second floor but does not enter the employee corridor. It’s deemed on assailable. Hmm, by the front, yes; from the outside, nobody has address that. The window in the Manifest Division is directly above that of the accounting office, thirty-two feet above the sidewalk. It is twelve feet above the ledge of the Ticket Department. Our acrobatic burglar could climb down on a rope and

defeat the window latch until we ruined everything with improvements. Now, she must devise another way.

This afternoon, I had the pleasure of meeting deputies Tom Phales and Chester Wilkes. The latter is dashing, a bit impetuous but witty, and he walks with a slight limp. Deputy Phales is a rugged older fellow, the introspective experienced type. Mr. Hennessy said he was Sheriff Smallwood's right-hand man. The boss had me assist the two by entering the Haynes tomb. Needless to say, the deputies were too wide and inflexible to squeeze between the tomb and stone abutment of the bridge and then right-angle through the mostly buried opening. Therefore, the Major told me to assist them. That is, after changing from my splendid new uniform into excavation attire. This time, I carried along a battery-powered lantern to illuminate the interior.

Upon entering the tomb, I found blankets spread out over the pile of sandy dirt clogging most of the entrance and a sheet covering a square of brick floor at the rear. There was one sack instead of two, containing two fresh white blouses and black skirts wrapped in laundry paper, no tags. They were duplicates of those used for the uniforms for ladies working in our offices. The fabric, however, was much better. Inside the wrapping of each set, there were slips of paper with dressmaker's notations of measurements. After removing one note and then carefully restoring everything to its original state, I returned outside.

"Surprise, gentlemen! Our 'ghost' uses the tomb as her changing room. These are her measurements." I handed the note to the Major. "She is about Ella's height and slimmer than either of us."

"The officers described the burglar they chased as 'robust and muscular.' She might have a partner. That might explain why the sergeants reported her being in two places at the same time."

"Oh, that make sense. Tell us what you saw."

"One laundry sack containing fresh counterfeit company issued blouses and skirts; and she uses blankets to spread over the dirt to prevent them from becoming soiled while crawling out. I suppose it is a hiding place, too."

"Hmm, this explains why she enters and exits by way of the inclined plane and Sixth Street Bridge. It is an excellent hiding place; she can change her appearance; the bridge easement is county property and part of the public way; and escaping across the Fourth Street Bridge is easy. Nobody would notice. We can only apprehend her on McNair's road between the bridges."

"A watchman's hut would solve that." At this point, Deputy Phales interjected.

"There is a good possibility that your burglar's close call mid-month ruined her plans. Since you patched up the holes in your defenses, surveilling this place might be a waste of time. As interesting as this artifact is, it's best that the county engineer has a road crew fill it in. At some later time, it might be worthwhile moving it elsewhere. That said, we barely have enough deputies to patrol the railroad district." Introducing a partner is an interesting twist: it could explain other inconsistencies. It looks like our "ghost" hunting crew is reconvening in the belvedere.

Myrna finally admitted that she has strong feelings for Sergeant Quince. Secretly, I knew he felt the same. [Why didn't you tell me earlier?] Hopefully, they'll share their secrets with each other before we leave.

Wildcat

In the afternoon, Sergeant Bates caught the professional confidence artist and general thief Anabelle Cusack on the concourse. She put up such a terrific fight that it took Captain Johnston,

Sergeant Quince, and Officer Billy Hubbard to restrain her. Unfortunately, her partner Charles Anderson Delaney was on one of the trains which departed during the commotion. She was not telling; and unfortunately, he was holding the tickets. Five trains left the station over a period of fifteen minutes between arrivals. Quickly, I recruited Myrna to play the role of a woman that the officers brought in for trespassing. She assumed the character of the crazy daughter in the Rutherford Creek Mystery, a play we performed during the spring. She embellished it with some nonsense from The Misadventures of Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight, convincingly insane when blended. After placing Myrna on the bench in the Rowdy Room, the fellows carried Miss Cusack in screaming and cursing to the top of her lungs. She almost bit a chunk out of Captain Johnston's arm! Instead of placing her on the bench, the gentlemen padlocked her cuffs to one of the rings in the floor and buckled a strap around her ankles. According to Major Durant, we have never had a prisoner behave in such a wild fashion. Myrna remained undaunted by these antics and managed to confound Miss Cusack to such a degree that she inadvertently revealed clues to where Mr. Delaney planned to get off. I was watching through the peephole so when Myrna mouthed the location, I quickly informed Captain Johnston. He immediately telephoned the detectives and station police at that place. Upon the train's arrival, they captured him. The Major is recommending Myrna for a commendation. All the fellows are exceedingly proud of her.

After the departure of the three o'clock trains, Ella told me to fetch my blue dress from the storeroom, quickly change, and tussle my hair.

"The fellows caught Anabelle Cusack, a pickpocket and confidence artist. Her partner Charley Delaney was on one of the trains that just left. Without knowing which one, he'll escape. She's obstinate, and a bit feisty. Can you pretend to be somebody we picked up? Say, how about the lunatic daughter from *The Rutherford Creek Mystery*?"

"Uh-huh. I sure can!"

"Marvelous! Hurry!" Since nobody was in the storeroom, I changed there, emerging disheveled, my collar and sleeves unbuttoned. Perfect! Ella had her cuffs ready. With automatic diligence, she closed them snug around my wrists. Though neither of us considered it at the time, giving me enough slack to squeeze through a hand was appropriate for the situation. Once in the Rowdy Room, she padlocked me to the bench – another standard procedure that worked to my disadvantage. "Eventually, she'll settle down; then, let something slip. I know her type: talk or bust, mostly about herself. Let her lead. Easy. Back in a moment with the wildcat. I'll watch through the peephole, so don't worry about a thing." She rushed out, and then I heard the key-turn. Once more, I was looking forward to putting my acting skills to the test: this time with a real lady prisoner! Little time passed before a frightful tirade of protests punctuated by shocking obscenities erupted from outside, growing ever wilder! When the door open, my mouth dropped. Captain Johnson entered the room back first, his attention rivetted to the flailing wild woman held by sergeant Bates and Quince. She strained to clamp a bite on each. I gasped! Once inside, Ella rushed in and wrapped both arms around Miss Cusack's legs, so Captain Johnston could buckle a wide leather strap around her ankles. With that accomplished, Ella grasped hold of the strap while Sergeant Bates and Officers Quince lowered her to the floor. Captain Johnston padlocked her cuffs to a floor ring. Once he retreated, Ella and the officers stepped clear of danger. Anabelle recoiled, seated with knees bent, glaring.

She was petite, pretty, and fashionably dressed but that was irrelevant. Her temper was fierce, and that overshadowed everything – nothing short of petrifying! This lady was truly the "dangerous sort" who needed a Rowdy Room! I couldn't help but pull away. Captain Johnston winked at me

as he departed, while the officers, wiped their brows and breathed a sigh while making way for him. Ella grasped my left arm.

"I brought you some company, Miss LeQuire. This she-devil is Anabelle Cusack. Do you think the two of you might get along? The doctor is on his way to take you back, but you'll have a little wait before his train arrives. He's bringing some nice gentlemen friends and your medicine." Uh-huh, I remember the role. Anabelle scowled when I smiled at her. After turning my eyes to the ceiling and giggling, the "wild woman" complained. Her imprisonment with a lunatic was an inexcusable affront. Ella snapped back. "Enough of that! She's harmless; you're not." Anabelle countered with a fusillade of threats and curses, but Ella ignored her, suppressing a laugh on her way out. The door closed; the key turned; I grinned. This was terrifying!

"Think this is funny, crazy girl?"

"That's a pretty dress."

"It was a pretty dress before those brutes manhandled me!"

"It's a good thing the officers saved you from them. They're always very gentlemanly. 'Stop. I see you, Myrna.' So, I crawled out from my hiding place. The sergeant had some naughty bracelets for me to wear. I wasn't getting away this time. They sure are shiny! 'That's nickel plating, girl; and they're fresh out of the box, too! You're going to be the first prisoner in them.' Uh-huh, I was first! So, click-click-click-click and they were on, nice and snug. They adjust smaller for ladies. What did you do? Get into a brawl?"

"Nothing!"

"Good. I escaped from *Schloss Schweinshaxe*. Count von Rohrzange sent Dr. Blister and some soldiers to bring me back, but I outsmarted them!" I concocted a vivid tale about having repeatedly thwarted the count's attempts to abduct me. A wasted effort: it didn't matter because she wasn't listening. Her plight was all that mattered. Most whiners exaggerate insignificant setbacks, embracing new perceived catastrophes readily, but Miss Cusack was in a pickle!

"What do you know, crazy girl! I'm going to prison this time for years. You think Charley is going to wait for me?"

"Is that your fellow?"

"He is my partner!"

"That's nice but do you love him?"

"No. He's just my partner. You wouldn't understand."

"You're a tagalong girl!"

"I am not! What?"

"Sure, you are! Tagalong girls have been around since the beginning. When the boys decided to spear some dinner, a couple or three girls from the tribe wanted to join in the fun. I suppose, being that things were a bit different back then, they had a grand time of it! Girls had spears, too; likely, not the best ones, but you work with what you have. If they did the butchering, no doubt they ended up with a good cut to take home. That fancy dress you're wearing is like a whole slab! The boys liked those tagalong girls; but if the lot of them wandered off along the way, it might be a while before the fellows realized they had no lady friends. No matter: they still had the dogs. That's the end of my story." I smiled and waited for her response. Anabelle looked like she bit into an unroasted chestnut. "There's nothing like a good hunting dog! Do you need a cushion?" I probably when too far, because she let loose with a deep-throated wail, which was mostly growl, and then she yelled out a sustained curse that included frequent references to my parts. It was quite impressive for a spontaneous outburst! Eventually, her spleen vented towards Charley Delaney. He abandoned her! Oh, how tragic! After thrashing about until she became exhausted, Anabelle

changed her tune. Charley was wonderful! Prior to our meeting in the Rowdy Room, I knew nothing about Anabelle Cusack and Charley Delaney; after we parted company, I chose not to inquire into the outcome of their trial. Mr. Delaney fought in the war with Spain. Anabelle was not sure of his age, but she thought he was at least forty years old; she claimed to be twenty-eight. I'd guess thirty-five.

"Charley figured out a way to live big without spending his own money! He's naturally likeable and said just the right things folks of different thinking wanted to hear. That took some studying! In a way, he was always there to give a helping hand but that was just his way of getting in the door. Whether it's a mob of rubes or the sour old skinflints whining about anything new, you tell them what they want to hear. They want somebody to say they're right and it doesn't matter who. Does that make sense to you, Crazy Girl?"

"Do you want to know why my folks think I'm not quite right?"

"Hush! You're a fool!"

"That's close enough. Anyway, Charley cozies up to mule-headed moneybags, they invite him to their barbeques, and he drinks their liquor. Just because not behaving myself might be a problem doesn't mean I'm an imbecile. I'm listening. What do you think of this parlor? It's so clean and bright; freshly polished benches with lace-fringed cushions and shiny hardware. Ladies appreciate fine furniture! Oh, your man is a sycophant. That's a pretty word for a sly rascal who gets ahead by telling folks what they want to hear."

"Nice, girl; you figured it out. Since he's a persuader, sometimes a political boss sends him out to stump for their man."

"So, what do you do?"

"Nothing; I am decoration. Except when things get tight. From the time I was little, taking things was second nature. That's how I met Charley. I took his wallet. This was while he was running his mouth to some fool in a train station. The railroad detective saw me do it, so things weren't looking good at all. When Charley claimed I was his idiot cousin playing a prank, they set me loose. After that, he offered to take me along."

"You're a tagalong girl!"

"Stop it!" When Mr. Delaney outlives his welcome in one place, they move on. If their money runs out before he finds a new patron, Anabelle steals some! He provides the distraction so she can do it. Their dry spell lasted long enough for the railroads to start hunting for both. Even so, she was more recognizable – show-off! Throughout Charley's lengthy career as a parasite, the scamp never faced charges for his subtle swindles, whereas Anabelle stood before the judge numerous times for various petty crimes. Uh-huh, watch your step, Ladies: I'm not surprised that he sent her ahead in the clearing to create a diversion for his escape. No matter: he was holding their loot. At noon, there were six passenger trains preparing to leave: the northbound express, the southbound express, the mail train going south, the express connecting to the Central line, and the northbound "way" train to Orchard that stops at every station. It was one of the busiest times of the day. For which train did he purchase a ticket? My guess is the northbound "way" train. He had an opportunity to get off at every station-stop. That is, if he boarded any of them. He could have walked out of the station and disappeared into the noon crowd on North First Avenue.

"Sometimes, the railroad catches us. This is the third time for me. Have you ever been up in a hot-air balloon?"

"Just you stop it, Crazy Girl!"

"My name is Mademoiselle Myrna LeQuire, not Crazy Girl! From the looks of it, I'd say, compared to you, anybody would peg me as level-headed as they come. You're a regular wild

woman!" That did it! Anabelle tore into me with the filthiest language, all along threatening to gouge out my eyes, then strangle me! In her rage, she attempted to slip out of her handcuffs. Maybe, being small-boned, she could; for me, there was no doubting the effectiveness of a good fit. That was frightening! If free, it wouldn't take long before Anabelle unbuckled the strap around her ankles. How could I fight her off? My feet? There would be little time to think it through. Hopefully, Ella would rush in before this wildcat leaped on me! Fortunately, the lady became quickly frustrated with her efforts, probably because it hurt, and turned to sobbing. It was a prolonged display of infantile bawling. "I'm so sorry! That was mean of me. Let's just forget I even called you a wild woman. Considering that things are not going well for you today, I understand how you might be a tad upset." Without segue, her tone became mournful. [*She needed a better acting teacher.*]

"We already had taken seats in the car! If only I stayed, we would have been in Wayne City! I couldn't stand fifteen more minutes crammed inside with the heat and all those people. I needed some air! When I went out on the concourse, one of those brutes grabbed hold of me! I'm sure Charley didn't know I wasn't coming back until the train started moving! Tad upset? I'm done talking to you, Crazy Myrna!" I slumped back on the bench, gazed up at the ceiling, and then turned my eyes toward the door. Anabelle, curled up, was having a crying fit. Whether conscious of her slip or not, by mentioning Wayne City, she narrowed the possibilities: either Charley was on the northbound express or the northbound "way" train that arrived an hour behind it. If they were in a crowded car, it was the latter. Anybody traveling from Port Unity to any stop along the northern division (all stations before Orchard) was on that train. In that case, it wouldn't reach Wayne City for a while. Now, I had something to report to the detectives! That couldn't happen until the sheriff took Anabelle away. Fortunately, Ella was at the peephole. I mouthed slowly "Wayne City" several times. Eventually, the wildcat decided to declare a truce. She struggled to resume our chat, gradually returning to pitiful prattle between her bouts of tears, hair wild falling into her face, red eyes, and runny nose. I was anxious to have this end! Where was Sheriff Smallwood? If my valiant knights are slow to arrive, I need a hidden key or something! Otherwise, as a matter of course, my role in this vocation might entail voluntarily being the helpless maiden in need of rescuing. That is not independence. Ella needs to teach me her secrets before my next performance! When the door opened, Anabelle erupted into rage and was ready to fight. It took, Captain Johnston, sergeants Bates and Quince, and Deputy Phales to extricate her from the Rowdy Room. The jail matron that the sheriff brought along, a tall stocky type, settled her down in an instant by heaving the little she-devil over her shoulder like a sack. The gentlemen were impressed! Then, the door slammed shut. I stretched out on the bench, completely drained. A half-hour later, when the sheriff was gone, Ella released me. She reported "Wayne City" to Captain Johnston immediately after I mouthed it. In Major Durant's report, he credited me with obtaining the information necessary to apprehend Mr. Delaney. Bravo! [*We are certainly having an ample slice of adventure this summer!*]

The lady with the auburn hair

Thursday, July 13, 1916. Myrna and I saw an unaccompanied well-dressed statuesque lady with auburn hair disembark from the southbound afternoon express. Her features were striking. Upon setting foot on the platform, she handed an envelope to a distinguished looking gentleman who was waiting by the cars, saying nothing in passing. He quickly made his way to the Haynes Street exit. We followed the lady through the front entrance to the steps and then watched her walk away, proceeding on First Avenue until she was out of sight. That might be the "ghost lady"

burglar or not. She was only carrying her bag so apparently the lady had not traveled far. The letter exchange looked suspicious.

Friday, I saw the lady and her gentleman again. This time, he handed her an envelope and then left by the Rose Street entrance. Carrying only her bag, she boarded the afternoon northbound way train.

Mr. McNair decided to have doors made for the old paint shop rather than have the openings bricked up. He intends to have the marvelous structure rebuilt for passenger car maintenance and replace the deteriorating wooden fence on the northern boundary with one of wrought iron like those installed at the inclined plane. Secretly, I hoped the picturesque ruins would remain so hurrah! Yesterday, he had me draw up plans for a guard shack beside it. Mr. Hennessy is sending me to the locomotive shop to do some drafting for Mr. Skinner.

Once again, Uncle Roscoe interrupted my instruction. During Myrna's absence, I am setting up a rack in our storage room for sundry outfits we use on 'the ladies' patrol,' Captain Johnston's term for clandestine surveillance of the station. The enigmatic Mr. Creswell intends to pay us a passing visit sometimes soon. He is travelling in his private car – impressive!

Next week, Frank and Louis are joining us for the watch in the belvedere. New to this arrangement is a lookout platform in the oak tree. From there we have a clear view over the back wall encompassing most of McNair's Road and the south abutment of the Fourth Street Bridge. We are using bicycle lights to signal to each other. The overhead illumination on the bridge bathes the surrounding area in warm light so it is easy to observe with the telescope.

Myrna suggested that we forgo our countrywomen disguises for our patrol and pretend to be college girls on a holiday. Aside, we know more about our distant college than Northeast Township, a mere thirteen miles away.

Pandemonium on the concourse

Dressed in our travelling attire and equipped with box cameras, we took up our posts, my sister on the concourse near the platforms, and I in the lobby. She told me to press the shutter only when our subjects were well-lit by light streaming in through the Palladian windows. At the opening of the concourse, Myrna had abundant light, but had to avoid glare. It was a quarter past two. If our suspicions proved true, we hoped to get several good photographs of the auburn-haired lady and her gentleman friend from our respective positions. The former appeared first and purchased a ticket for Northeast Depot on the afternoon mail train, a journey of twenty miles. I managed to take four photographs, one of which was close. The gentleman arrived at a quarter of three. At that time, there was a small crowd at the ticket counter. He continued onward to the concourse. I took one photograph of his profile and then followed.

Surprise! The express train from the south backed in with a private car coupled to its end. The celebrated Mr. Creswell arrived. Mr. Hennessy and Major Durant stepped inside for their meeting. So much for that. We had work to do.

Upon joining Myrna, we devised a ploy: capturing several pictures of the man and woman together while I pretended to pose near the rear of the way train. He passed her the envelope, and like before, turned away to exit the concourse by the north entrance. Sergeant Quince was watching at a short distance. Myrna followed the gentleman and Mr. Quince trailed behind both.

I walked behind the lady to the cars pretending to take photographs of the rear of Unity Station. After she boarded, I spoke briefly with Mr. Brookes, the conductor, asking him to keep an eye on our mysterious lady. At that moment, two burly men dressed as mechanics bounded into the car and pushed me to the floor. They rushed through the car and took hold of the lady. Several gentlemen passengers came to her aid. In short order, it became a brawl. Other passengers rushed past us on their way back to the platform.

As the gentleman letter-passer was leaving, I tried to take one more photograph of him. A young man appeared and the two began arguing. So, I took a picture of both. The ruckus drew the attention of Officer Albert McComber, who happened to be patrolling the concourse. When the argument became heated, Mr. Quince came to take me back to the platforms with other bystanders. The letter-passer yelled "Fool! They followed you here!" We heard two loud pops. "Run!" Both men leaped from the platform and then dashed off between the tracks. Four men dressed in work clothes converged on them from different points in the passenger yard. They had revolvers. A lit string of firecrackers landed near us – pop-pop-pop-pop-pop! Fire alarm bells in the station started ringing. At that moment, somebody yelled out "Quick, take cover!" Passengers on the platforms rushed into the cars of the closest train and others dashed through the concourse to the Haynes Street exit. The lamp above us shattered, raining down shards of glass! I grabbed Mr. Quince's arm and began running underneath the concrete butterfly shed of the platform, taking cover behind baggage carts along the way. Goodness! There was a man on his belly atop the baggage car of the northbound way train. We must warn Mr. Brooks! Ella was already aboard speaking with the conductor when the mischief started. On coming alongside the first passenger car, we saw our struggling lady dropped the letter out the window. It landed half-off the platform. I snatched it up before it fell to the tracks and dashed to safety. Mr. Quince and I then entered the car through the rear. The two brutes shoved the lady to the floor blocking our way and then muscled past her defenders, trampling Mr. Brooks on their way out. Ella quickly secured the lady's hands when she attempted to get away through the rear.

Captain Johnston bounded into our car with revolver drawn. "Mr. Brooks, there are six of them hold up in the ruins of the old paint shop. Our fellows have them flanked, but a rascal on the roof of your baggage car flat on his belly is keeping us from closing in. We assume he has a rifle or something worse. We can't risk it with all these people. I sent Sergeant Bates up to the engine. Now, take your remaining passengers through the cars to the end and wait. We are cutting loose the last four. After we're through the upper yards, take those folks into the station." Within moments, Mr. Brooks cleared the car. "Alright, Sergeant Quince, I want you to take the Levesque girls- Who is that?"

"The lady is mixed up in all this." At that moment, the train lurched forward! "What? Here we go. If that rascal jumps on our car and starts shooting through the roof we shouldn't stay bunched up. Myrna can take your lady behind the end seat. It might do a little good. Now, I'll stay at this end, Ella at the other end, and you in the middle. If he fires down, we fire up from three angles."

"Sir, after we get him out of the terminal, what's next?"

"We can't take him into Haynes Town Station, so if I were him, jumping off now might be the best of bad ideas. They're switching us to the loop running above town to the South Docks. Sheriff Smallwood and his deputies will be waiting at the crossing on the Sandyfield Road. That is, if Sergeant Richardson can get through to him. We're going slow unless that fellow stands up and starts shooting. Then, Mr. Bates is going to tell our boys to open it up. In that case, brace yourself for a sudden stop. They're throwing him off. Still, I don't think this 'soldier' is going to waste his

shots. When we stop at the crossing, that is an entirely different mess. On top of the car, he is out in the open with the sheriff's men on both sides, Mr. Bates in the cab, and us in here. Those deputies had better hold their fire."

"What if the sheriff isn't there?"

"We send him flying!"

Upon coming to a stop near the crossing Sergeant Bates called out to the deputies. "He jumped off back there!" They raced down the track to apprehend him. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Hennessy and Sheriff Smallwood stepped into the car. Ella and Sergeant Quince explained everything: taking pictures, the passing of the letter, the argument between the men, brutes forcing their way into our car, fireworks causing the panic, and capturing the lady. On reading the letter, Mr. Hennessy understood its cryptic text: "Tonight. Spring Garden Station. Express north. Tail end. Friends onboard." The last car on the northbound express belonged to Mr. Creswell. Somebody was planning to seize control of the train. Only our esteemed visitor could provide us with a clue as to why.

Hmm, the auburn lady is not our crafty burglar Fräulein Geisterdame. She is about an inch smaller than Ella, too robust to fit into the uniform dresses I found in the tomb and looked to be in her early thirties. Otherwise, she could be the burglar's older sister. Her bag contained a large amount of cash, a fresh blouse, and sundry toiletries but nothing identifying her. She refused to answer any questions. Sheriff Smallwood decided to hold her as a recalcitrant witness to the mayhem which took place until he determined whether to press charges. Short of a confession, the case depended upon capturing her friends or enemies. As things turned out, the deputies search for them in vain. Even the rifleman escaped.

Mr. Hennessy was taking me back to corporate headquarters. After the Engineering Department developed our photographs, we needed to have a discussion with Mr. Buchanan.

Our auburn-haired prisoner was silent. I asked her how she managed to escape from the overhead walkway a month earlier. She merely laughed and gave me a sly smile. Ah-ha! She slipped up. Sheriff Smallwood wanted Sergeant Quince and me to accompany Deputy Phales back to the courthouse jail to give our statements. Uncle Roscoe ordered us to return to his office for a meeting when they finished. Deputy Wilkes and Head Matron Cole assumed custody of the woman. Upon arriving at the courthouse, a reporter and photographer from the Messenger appeared unannounced. Chester told them to tagalong with him to the headquarters of the manhunt at Sandyfield. I recalled Deputy Phales questions as such:

"Do you have proof that this woman is an associate of the man who jumped from the train?"

"No. He was in league with several others who attempted to take her by force along with the man who gave her the letter, and his friend. All but she are still at large."

"Who else witnessed the passing of this letter?"

"Aside from Officer Quince, we also have photographs taken before the panic showing a well-dress gentleman passing her an envelope. Sheriff Smallwood should have everything this evening. Before the first shots, Myrna overheard him tell another man 'They're going to kill both of us!'"

"According to Deputy Wilkes, she refuses to identify herself?"

"The lady refuses to say anything! Besides that, she made an unsuccessful attempt to discard the envelope. The letter contains an ambiguous message concerning the northbound overnight express, but Mr. Creswell must examine it to be sure. He is a government man of some sort."

"Is this the lady who broke into the terminal two months back? She sure looks like those drawings."

"We are not sure, sir. Myrna thinks not. The measurements of those dresses from the tomb don't match her; and to be an athlete, she was too easy to subdue."

"Still, she might give us some trouble. When Sheriff Smallwood returns, we'll question her again. To be safe, I am recommending to the head matron that we take special precautions. We'll send her to the cells at the prison farm early tomorrow morning. Are you the arresting officer?" Mr. Quince looked at me.

"Yes, I am." Addled, I gave him a full account of what happened in the station; and mentioned that having witnessed the lady's unusual behavior in prior weeks, we decided to photograph her and her gentleman, yet there wasn't any proof yet that they were committing a crime. Both Uncle Roscoe and Sheriff Smallwood were charging her with obstructing an investigation. If she continued in an obdurate fashion before the judge, he might hold her in contempt of court. That was all.

All our photographs turned out fine so the meeting between the lady and her gentleman was irrefutable! I told Frank and Louis to tell Mrs. Keane that it was unlikely that any of us would return home for dinner on time. However, they were more than welcome to take our places at the table. My smart boys were anxious to hear what happened, but I wasn't sure. While Mr. McNair was printing our photographs, I reported what we witnessed to Granddaddy James. First, he telephoned the operator to connect all his calls to Mr. Buchanan's office and then waited for me to speak. I described everything in detail. After hearing me through, he was certain that we didn't do anything to precipitate the chaos. It would have taken place without us. Riding along with Captain Johnston was another matter. Well, we didn't have a choice. It happened. Mr. Buchanan showed up at the door in a tither.

"This must remain between us. Charles Creswell, Hennessy, financier Simon Parks, and two government men are in my office. They think somebody might attempt to take control of the northbound overnight express when it stops at Spring Garden. We must inform Sheriff Jackson." Granddaddy James drummed his fingers on the desk.

"Let me take care of this. So, Oscar, you said the editor of the *Messenger* called you?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Telephone him right now! Say that we have the situation in hand, but it's too early to say much about it, and then tell him that we don't need to mislead folks into thinking hoodlums are invading the terminal. They're not! Tell him that we suspect that pranksters caused a panic on the platforms when they set off firecrackers and somebody activated the alarms. The rascals fled through the passenger yard and made their escape onto Haynes Street through our fence at the Fourth Street Bridge. The incident delayed all but one of our departing trains by a half-hour. Our company is more than happy to honor the tickets of those who missed these delayed trains or refund the fare. Until our investigation is complete, that's enough. Now, close the door! Can't you see I'm getting the story firsthand from Myrna." After Mr. Buchanan left, Granddaddy James prepared a tonic for both of us and then removed a small booklet from his safe. "If there was a conspiracy to seize control of the overnight express, the band of brutes and 'pranksters' brought it out into the open by creating a panic."

I am not at liberty to reveal anything about what happened next other than he telephoned somebody especially important.

An odd situation

The lady sitting in jail was possibly a participant in a conspiracy devised by an unknown party to take over a train, or the letter she carried conveyed intelligence for a different purpose.

Regardless, Sheriff Smallwood didn't think she was our burglar. Lydia sketched her because she had an interesting face and our watchful employees remember seeing her, but she was not *Fräulein Geisterdame*. Also, since Mr. Creswell didn't anticipate passing through Port Unity until recently, it seemed unlikely the months-long infiltration of our burglar was unrelated. Furthermore, the transportation department did not receive instructions concerning the private car until this week; and then, it could be anybody's private car. Mr. Hennessy, however, produced an invoice for the service dated from the last week of June. Granddaddy James put an end to this debate. All of us set out to discover one thing and unexpectedly tumbled into something dangerous. It was too early to unravel the details.

Of our photographs, only three were immediately relevant to Sheriff Smallwood's case. Mr. Buchanan wanted the rest of the photographs and all the negatives locked away in his safe until he received a formal request from the court. If the sheriff wanted to publish her picture in the newspapers for his investigation, it was best he used his jail photographs. So, who are these conspirators? The gentlemen didn't address that. No matter: all would fit together nicely in some fashion after somebody figured out what they were after. Some fashion is right! The meeting concluded with a temporary agreement to keep Simon Parks out of the case. Mr. Creswell decided to continue north on the morning express so as not to pass through Spring Garden in the dead of night. Hopefully, the plotters having lost their messenger would not be prepared. Still, the whole odd affair had him baffled. He wondered whether sympathizers of the opposing European combatants were battling over a prize on our soil. Sheriff Smallwood, by contrast, speculated that all of the players were connected to rival organized crime organizations. Likewise, he thought our acrobatic burglar *Fräulein Geisterdame* was working with a gang. Mr. Hennessy maintained his assertion that the principals were foreign agents who aligned with sympathizers and professional criminals. Who knows? While many of the pieces appeared to fit, adding a new piece might reveal they fit together in another way, or our pieces come from different puzzles.

The vanishing

At six o'clock Saturday morning, the night matron at the courthouse jail discovered our other "ghost" escaped. How the lady accomplished the feat had all of us baffled: she was wearing nothing but a jail dress; the matron discovered her cell door locked, and so was the barred door of the women's wing; as well as the door leading to the main offices; the night matron checked all the cells before turning out the lights; there were three deputies on duty, including one who had the key to the ironclad door opening to the outer hallway. Somehow, she managed to slip out despite all these safeguards. Sheriff Smallwood suspected that she had accomplices in his department or simply it was a case of gross negligence and complacency. Ella considered the possibility that the lady could escape jail on her own if she had the burglary skills of *Fräulein Geisterdame*. Up we go in the imagination balloon!

Our heroine, Mademoiselle LeQuire floats high above the night sky searching the diaphanous miasma below wither spyglass. Ah-ha, there they are! Doktor Blister and his assistant Herr Zahnschmerzen wait outside *Boîte de Craquelins* prison in their sixteen-cylinder Tschüss-Dummkopf *Modell 60* while *Fräulein Geisterdame* helps her sister Aloisa escape – ha-ha-ha! Can the cunning vixen sneak the cunning vixen pass the *députés et matrons extraordinaires*? Uh-huh, she did! How? Considering the likelihood of capture, the villainous crew formulated a strategy to address the possibility.

Whether alone or with help, the task would require preparation. They would start by examining the architect's plans for the courthouse in the Office of the County Engineer. Remember him? He was supposed to determine what to do with the Haynes Tomb.

Our fellows

We are running out of summer. In twelve days, our nine-month exile at *Château de Glace* begins; so, I had my last opportunity to ask Phillip Quince whether he thought a rambunctious overly high-spirited rough-and-tumble nearly-six-foot exceptionally nice young lady might unintentionally damage her fellow if he happens to be five-foot-eight. He didn't think so but was willing to take his chances. Good enough! I kissed him. He emerged from my embrace unscathed. "Let's try again!" That kiss lasted much longer. "No harm done." Hurrah! That was fun! "Once more!" There wasn't the time for a third try but he could take me out to the picture show Sunday afternoon. Wonderful! Afterward, we can invite him over for ice cream. Granddaddy James thinks Mr. Quince is an upstanding young man with a future in the company. He is now on the list of approved suitors.

Ella and Louis (he's the quiet one) are pairing up. Frank has his eye on an older girl. She studies bugs and likes hiking in the woods. That might work out. [*My-my, Myrna finally snagged Phillip Quince. She's been after him since they first met two years ago. Good! I think they are an excellent match despite having completely different temperaments.*]

The capture of Fräulein Geisterdame

Stationed in the oak tree perch, I was getting tired of watching nothing happen. With the exception of work in the locomotive shop, all activity in the passenger yard ceased at one. At a quarter after, Frank and Louis ended their watch in the belvedere and came down to arrange our chairs on the back lawn. Ella brewed coffee and they were ready to light up their cigars, socialize, and munch on slices of my contraband chocolate layer cake. It was Monday morning, our summer apprenticeships end on Tuesday, and we had a week to play before returning to college. Drats! After maintaining our surveillance of McNair's Road for several weekends, Fräulein Geisterdame failed to make an appearance. Enough of that! Besides, Ella 'overheard' the latest risqué joke about Parson Bungee and Mrs. Jeeters. I wanted to hear it! Ha-ha-ha! Ladies, I know a secret. [*Don't you dare!*] Time for cake and coffee. The fire alarm bell at Unity Station interrupted our delightful respite from earnestly achieving nothing. Immediately, we went out on McNair's Road to investigate. On our way towards the station, fire alarms throughout the terminal started ringing. Where's the fire? We encountered Sergeant Butterfield on the front steps awaiting the arrival of the fire engine.

"Here come the Levesque sisters, if this isn't turning out to be a night of delights! Did the superintendent send you out to investigate the ruckus? Well, we can't find a fire anywhere, but all the alarms are going off, the telephones went dead, and every light inside the station went out!" Goodness! Sergeant Frier and his patrol rounded the east corner of the building. "What's happening back there?" He shook his head. I took hold of Ella's arm.

"The electrics panel for the station is in the first basement of the station; the fire alarms relays and telephone junction boxes are in the basement of the annex; and the pipe tunnel connects the two. What does that tell you?" Ella conferred with Sergeant Frier and our smart boys.

"One of the main pipes bringing water to the station burst flooding both the basements in the station and annex." No-no-no! Water in the station would flow down to the second basement. Think! Frank interjected.

“But the lights in the annex are still on. They would have shorted out, too. It must be sabotage!” No-no-no! It’s obvious! I could no longer contain myself.

“Gentlemen, this chaos is all misdirection! Nobody thought about putting a grill on the pipe tunnel in the annex because the building is in use overnight; we have new locks, changed out old locks, but didn’t replace any in the Ticket Department because they have alarm bells.” At that moment, we heard the approaching fire engine. “It doesn’t matter; she makes keys. Uh-huh, our lady burglar is back! The escape route is through the pipe tunnel and out the little brick building near the locomotive shop. Why are you standing here listening to me? Go! Turn on your bicycle lights!” Immediately, Sergeant Frier dispatched his patrol to secure the pipe tunnel while he and Ella along with officers Atchison and Paxton assumed safe positions near the doors leading to the Ticket Department. In the company of Frank and Louis with watchmen Loyd, Moss, and Hunt leading the way, I made my way through the lobby of the station, and down the steps to the first basement. Which switch to throw on the electrics panel? Uh-huh, the big one. The light came on; pump motors lurched into motion; and then we beheld the open grill of the pipe tunnel, its fancy five-lever lock dangling from the hasp. In an instant, Sergeant Butterfield and two bewildered members of the fire brigade joined us. One of Sergeant Frier’s men came bounding down the steps. Panting, he reported that somebody barred the basement doors of the annex from the inside. The night transportation manager needed to get in to restore telephone communication and turn off the infernal alarms. Our firemen friends were eager to entertain his request.

Surprise! Three members of Sergeant Frier’s patrol apprehended our crafty lady burglar emerging from the brick building near the locomotive shop (she wasn’t nice). Surprise! The feisty young acrobat is a brunette (uh-huh, that figures), not anything like the woman in Lydia’s watercolor and she dressed entirely in black. In addition to the loot, the officers discovered her satchel contains numerous keys she fashioned to smoothly carry through the robbery. So, what tripped her up? Her competition set her back a month. What competition? Guess! The auburn-haired lady.

Our Fräulein Geisterdame is Marcia Lamb, daughter of the notorious forger Edward Ralph Lamb, alias Percy Hammond. She is just another girl apprenticing in the family business. Her counterfeit company papers give her name as Marian Dempsey, a clerical worker in the Freight Department, Warehouse “B.” She is on payroll and her supervisor described her as a model employee. So, how did she find the Haynes tomb? While plotting her escape route from the station officers she found the opening. It proved to be quite versatile: changing room, hiding place, and storage.

Miss Lamb is presently occupying a cell in the women’s division of the county prison farm. Claiming to have acted alone, she pleaded guilty to a host of crimes, and is now awaiting transportation to the penitentiary. Sergeant Frier and his patrol received most of the credit for her arrest, thus redeeming themselves after their two embarrassing failures. Myrna is happy for them. Me, too. Neither one of us crave more publicity.

Miss Lamb originally intended to break into the Ticket Department through the window as I suspected. So, what was the auburn-haired lady after? The orders pertaining to the pulling and spotting of Mr. Creswell’s private car while it was travelling on our line. All along we suspected the burglar was after freight manifests but never gave a thought about the records in the Passenger Train Department.

Farewell

Sorry, Glorious Ladies, that's all for this year's summer adventures. Our fellows saw us off at the station. Mr. Quince loaded us down with a crate of ginger snaps to munch on during the winter since we cannot take over the college kitchen; we also received keepsake cigars from Frank and Louis. I now have several in my jewel box. Ella thinks Phillip is right for me. Drats! I anticipate nine months of thinking about him every day.

CHAPTER SIX

1917

Myrna is that very tall, bespectacled, brown-eyed brunette on campus who is sometimes pretty, always eccentric, overly high-spirited, and given to weaving tall tales, fond of verbiage and muddling discourse, often referring to herself in first and third person in the same paragraph, or the comedienne, though on stage, she relishes playing villainous women; but back home, she is "Miss Something-or-Other and Whatnot," the tagalong girl, aspiring sleuth, and pest, who is also a rough-and-tumble tomboy tinkerer-polymath, being the aforesaid twenty going-on-twenty-one bookish maiden Myrna Levesque pretending to be a lady, or the dowdy disheveled draftswoman, sweetheart of the railroad's engineering department and... she's always ready for adventure. How's that, Myrna?

*Grand-père sent his unpolished lasses to college, an exclusive institution of culture and minimal practical education for ladies, known to the inmates affectionately by the sobriquet *Château de Glace*. Remote, and cold most of the academic year, this fine institution is not well-situated! The nearest real town is an hour by rail and not worth the ticket, and the newspapers coming through the mail receive a public recitation before going the rounds, articles cut out along their journey to the stove. It seems like the students are captives in an ancient mountain stronghold, having little choice but make the most of it.*

The girls study music, literature, painting, theatre, and philosophy. The founders envisioned a serene refuge anchored in a remote outpost of civilization with inspiring vistas, pristine forests, and healthy air to nurture the entire substance of the feminine psyche. These amateur naturists certainly visited the site of their alpine paradise during the summer. We stranded damsels refer to our montane stronghold as "the cold storage locker for young ladies." Even so, subsequent boards lavished stupendous sums on cultural amenities: a faculty comprised of celebrated (and mostly cash-strapped) lady artists, dramatists, writers, musicians, and lecturers on the sundry facets of achieving societal tidiness and the infinite delights of thinking about thinking. We have an excellent theatre and recital hall, both rivalling any found on most university campuses.

Since the nearest conduit to the outside world is the train station-post office-general store three miles downhill, we must stimulate our minds with unceasing presentations, readings, debates, speeches, and performances. There are six full-length theatrical formal productions each term, but student works of all lengths and genres enjoy frequent staging with barebone trappings, usually a hurried assemblage of costumes, props, and furnishings. The privileged daughters of society have a voracious appetite for plots involving lady detectives, romantic rivalries, scorned women, unjustly accused women, scandalous women, dangerous women, spirits, adventures, revenge, and adultery. Playful banter and sarcasm are a mainstay of the dialogue and anything suggestive, savored. If there is nothing ready to stage, any semi-cohesive hodgepodge of songs, comedic scenes, and dancing in costume will fill the gap. [On the bright side, the administration halfheartedly tolerates a healthy measure of silliness.] Myrna and I share a common fondness for acting, except our friends can tell the difference when I'm not. Our original comic serial "The Misadventures of Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight" is a favorite with the girls. We satirize our college, ourselves, and the gentlemen who complicate our lives.

Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight are amateur balloonists who had nothing better to do than leapfrog around prewar Europe, frequently finding themselves at odds with the local authorities, aviators, and sometimes villains. These high-spirited peculiar dilettantes who blithely drop into ongoing squabbles always end up in a predicament. Yet, both are good-natured, idealistic, courageous, and resourceful, always managing to extricate themselves from imminent catastrophe or legal complications – and handcuffs, absolutely! With the coming of war, they became Maréchal Durant’s fearless agents. “If the mission is foolhardy and capture, a certainty, send the girls.”

Amongst a handful of greenhouse sprouts, I enjoy the unearned distinction of woman-of-the-world. Fortunately, reticence to share my insights has preserved several girl’s cherished illusions – not Myrna. She calls me her “clandestine lecturer” in feminine wiles and unladylike skills. More than a few of our classmates are more practiced in both, so my instruction benefits from having many opportunities to point out excellent specimens from a safe distance.

Eagerly, we await letters from our fellows but the latest batch left us forlorn. Phillip Quince, Billy Hubbard, and Albert McComber enlisted. With a good word from Mr. Levesque’s Washington friend, the McNair boys joined a railway engineering regiment shortly after we entered the war. All are leaving before our semester ends. Drats! [Drats again!]

Major Durant sent us a letter describing our summer assignments. Uncle Roscoe decided to hire six women officers rather than three, all fitting his [unrealistic] standards of education, athleticism, and dedication to duty. [I want to meet them!] The Major assumed the responsibility for their training and the convivial Captain Johnston is their supervisor. He assigned them to Unity Station during the dayshift, freeing sergeant Bates and his old men for yards patrol. The ladies are courteous, knowledgeable, and eager to assist. The public likes them. That’s said, they are much better at catching wrongdoers than their predecessors. Liz merely manages their paperwork (time sheets, the duty roster, training records, purchase orders, records), the same thing she did in my uncle’s office. He wants her back at the end of the war. When we graduate, he intends to place me in charge of the lady officers. [Hurrah!] As expected, Myrna will complete her station officer training with Major Durant and assist him in his new appointment as liaison to Sheriff Smallwood’s department. Uncle Roscoe likes the idea of pairing Myrna with the Major because Mr. Buchanan is anxious to implement our part of the joint agreement and “she needs to find an administrative niche.” [What exactly does that mean?]

My meeting with Mr. Hennessy

Home again! This morning, I’ll receive my assignment for the summer from Mr. Hennessy. Well, it might be several assignments. No matter: “The Girl” is ready for anything. I’m excited!

“Good morning, Myrna. Did you accomplish anything remarkable this year?”

“Remarkable? Let me think. Hmm, well, compared to last summer, no, but I earned high marks, performed in plays, and took invigorating walks in the snow. It was fun!” No, it wasn’t!

“What’s in your skirt pockets?” Not again!

“Oh, the usual things.” He placed the wooden box on the edge of his desk. “Alrighty, two packs of cards. I can shuffle a deck one-handed left and right simultaneously. Watch this! No? I have housekeys, hair ribbons – I need those – ginger snaps, plyers, screwdriver, change purse, scissors, watch, pencils, a pretty rock, one of Frank’s cigars, compass, trigonometry tables – I need

them – change key for a three-bolt mortice lock, three rubber balls. Watch! No? Next pocket, oh-my, well, there’s my roadmaster’s tapeline, the bottom half shows tenths and hundreds of a foot, and a reverse pointed spike for stringers, pocketknife, lag screw, and this is my birthday present from Liz. It’s an antique brass comb for my tangles. Let’s see, this is my pocket sketchpad, especially nice for making impromptu drawings, and a box of hankies, can opener, toothbrush, and nothing up this sleeve and nothing up this sleeve except this spoon. How did that get there?” He examined my antique comb.

“Where are your lockpicks?”

“Inside my boot.” I grinned. He shook his head. “Alrighty, in the box.”

“Liz gave you a mane comb. This is for horses.”

“Um, right, but- For horses?”

“An ordinary hairbrush is satisfactory. Keep your loose drawing utensils in a pencil box. Your housekeys, hair ribbons, one handkerchief, watch, sketchpad, change purse, and trigonometry tables are acceptable. The company has an ample supply of tools so take yours home, except the pocketknife. You’ll need it to sharpen your pencils. I don’t anticipate Mr. Harland assigning you to a track crew now or ever so you can return the spike and screw to his department.”

“Yes, sir. What about my ginger snaps?” He removed one from the bag and took a bite. Oops!

“Excellent as always, Myrna. Thank you.” Drats! “Have you been studying locksmithing?”

“In a way, sir. I’m reading Ella’s books, and occasionally we clean and repair locks. I made that set of picks in my basement workshop.”

“Providing that you receive formal training from Mr. Garington, they are an acceptable addition to your equipment. Pay him a visit this morning, fill out the usual paperwork, and begin. That is only half of your first assignment. Tomorrow, Major Durant is taking you to Sheriff Smallwood’s office to fill out his paperwork pertaining to the joint agreement. In a *limited* capacity, you will be assisting Deputy Tom Phales with his investigations.”

“How can I help him?”

“I’m not sure. Regardless, Major Durant will come along to shepherd you through the assignment. After last summer, Mr. Buchanan *does not* want you doing anything, let’s say, astonishing, like climbing into cisterns and tombs, chatting with dangerous criminals, pulling Mr. Bradley from the coal pile, stepping into the line of fire to save Sergeant Quince, and taking thrilling impromptu train rides with Captain Johnston and Sergeant Bates. I think you performed admirably in all these situations and rendered exceptional service to the company. For that reason, I am delegating the responsibility of moderating your heroic impulses to Major Durant. To my knowledge, nobody is more experienced at the task.” Wonderful! [*He happens to be your worse bad influence excluding me.*]

My assignment for the summer is supervising the women officers. Captain Johnston and I can conscript Myrna into assisting with training when she is not doing “something-or-other and whatnot” elsewhere. In June, Uncle Roscoe is sending me to New Mexico for a few weeks to study under Maude Fitzgerald-Ramseur, the heiress from Connecticut who foiled four attempts by kidnappers to hold her for ransom. The purpose of my visit is entirely practical, thwarting kidnappers; however, her remarkable skills and interests align with mine. I look forward to taking the trip to New Mexico on my own, not counting the railroad detectives seeing me there, and learning new practical techniques from Miss Fitzgerald-Ramseur.

The joint agreement

Earlier in the year, Mr. Buchanan and Sheriff Smallwood worked out the details of their joint agreement to collaborate on investigations of common interest. In short, “each party shares information, coordinates aspects of the procedures taken within their respective spheres to best aid each other’s progress and provide useful assistance through sharing the expertise of capable personnel on temporary contract.” This morning, Major Durant and I went to the courthouse to sign the paperwork. The first order of business was reading the full text of the agreement, and then signing it. The sheriff then had us review the contract for my assignment and a worn hardbound folder containing a stack of about twenty typed pages.

“This is our investigation into the mystery lady’s jailbreak. After a year, we do not know how; however, we determined that she did so without the help of our staff, and there is no evidence suggesting somebody from the outside assisted her. Neither conclusion is ironclad. Mr. Hennessy told me about your locksmithing and toolmaking, so figure out whether the lady could escape by herself. I’m impressed that you figured out how Marcia Lamb planned to pull off her robbery just in time to catch her. Excellent work! If you think of something, let me know. No hurry, but I would like to close this file eventually. Be thorough and support your findings with some proof either way it goes.”

Deputy Phales filled out an employee file for me with all my particulars, had me remove my company jacket and hat because they bore the company insignia, and then took me up three flights of stairs so he could photograph and fingerprint me. Upon returning downstairs, the sheriff presented me with my contractor’s letter.

Cato Houghton

Another overcast day, but the downpour didn’t come until after we arrived home. Myrna decided she wanted to take the shortcut from the baggage department to the Sixth Street Bridge. It’s still a posted area but our credentials allow us to pass through it. No sooner had we started home did the wind pick up. Soon lightning streaked down from the dark clouds amassing north of the terminal. Nearing the bridge, a bolt of lightning struck nearby followed by a tremendous clap of thunder. My sister thought it was quite exciting. She wanted to pause to admire the display. I told her that we had better run home before the rain drenched us. It was already starting to sprinkle. Upon entering the house, Mrs. Keane scolded us for not taking our boots off on the back porch before entering. Fortunately, a thunderclap interrupted her prating, allowing us to press through, leaving her behind fuming. [Ha-ha-ha!]

Earlier in the day, Captain Johnston received a telephone call from the telegraph office in the station concerning a gentleman who was anxious to speak with me. A gentleman? Really? He was waiting in the lobby near the grand staircase. I gave little thought of going unaccompanied since the formidable Officer Claire Foster stood watch in the lobby. Upon arriving, I beheld a sturdy middle-aged dapper grandee of the muckety-muck sort, as handsome as Sam Culver, though having more gray in his hair and mustache. He wore a tasteful walnut brown suit of the old style, frock coat, black and silver thread embroidered vest, with brown matching tie, gloves, Fedora, and Balmoral boots. Even his silver knobbed walking stick matched! I was impressed and uneasy.

“Good afternoon, Miss Levesque. It is an honor to make your acquaintance. From time to time, I have seen you in the company of the esteemed Professor Hennessy at the theatre. My name is Cato Houghton, the proprietor of Houghton Metalworks & Scrap.” Cato Houghton? Uh-oh! Uncle Roscoe will have a conniption. I cleared my throat. “Forgive the imposition, but there is a

pressing matter of mutual concern that we must discuss. May I speak frankly?" Goodness! I took a deep breath and assumed a composed demeanor.

"Certainly, sir."

"Occasionally, your grandfather and I stand on opposing sides of various concerns, namely, those pertaining to real estate in the railroad district; and in politics, the Superintendent lends his support to the conservatives and I back Mr. Blackwell's populist coalition." Grandfather? He thinks I'm Myrna! "However, we periodically share a common interest. Certain out-of-towners set up business on both sides of the terminal to corrupt and fleece the masses of new arrivals from the countryside. On busy Friday evenings, a bouncer comes to North First to take advantage of the young ladies who work in the shops and offices. The folk in the district call him Demon Pete but he's merely a sly mortal scoundrel. Finally, somebody driving a Peerless automobile patrols the streets in the railroad district some nights frightening the residents with their mischief."

"Sir, while the company is concerned about the well-being of our employees living in the district, it is within Sheriff Smallwood's jurisdiction." He removed a sealed envelope from his pocket.

"I employ a number of men to keep watch over my holdings including those in the railroad district, the North Docks, and extending out to Unity Bluff. This letter contains intelligence gleaned from the residents pertaining to the noisome behavior of our outsider businessmen. All the necessary details are there. I know Professor Hennessy and Sheriff Smallwood have an informal arrangement. Please share this with them. Though the Popular Coalition is quite different under Mr. Blackwell's leadership, our organization still struggles with the legacy of the previous generation. Mr. Griggs and Sheriff Smallwood are bitter adversaries, so it is best to keep me out of the discussion. Furthermore, my men and their informants must remain safe. Hereafter, I'll share through another party to ensure your welfare. It was an honor meeting you, Miss Levesque."

"Before you go, please explain why you selected me as your messenger?"

"Not messenger, rather concerned party: this is your railroad. Good day, Miss Levesque."

That I granted Mr. Houghton a private audience was a serious mistake in Uncle Roscoe's book, that is, until he opened the envelope. After reading a few pages of its contents, he saw fit to have Major Durant join the discussion. The letter detailed an alliance between three named out-of-town "businessman" and a Laine County commissioner named Willard Grimes. The latter owns vast tracts of land fronting the Northeast River in that county. Mr. Houghton's informants discovered that his isolated stands of pine are a haven for bootleggers, their merchandise now entering the local market in great quantities. On the streets adjoining the north side of the terminal there are three widely spaced residences dispensing it. The proprietor of a flophouse in the North Docks neighborhood operates a saloon and brothel in the dilapidated commercial building adjoining his property. He rents it from Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware. The Major remarked that Lester Whitaker started a feeble business with an old steamboat and a wooden hulled barge called The Northeast River Navigation Company, making weekly trips to the old landings in Laine County. Most doubt whether "old man" Whitaker pays any attention to his youngest son's slipshod ventures. He should. Rumor has it that Lester takes on crates of moonshine on the downriver leg of the voyage.

Uncle Roscoe and the Major agreed that the sheriff should see the letter at the earliest moment. While everything in it described activities detrimental to the interests of the company, we lacked the authority to investigate any of it. That Mr. Houghton mistook me for Myrna left them at a loss. Neither one of us were jaded to the point where we could bargain with the likes of him, but

I was cynical enough to avoid the pitfalls. Even then, the safe course was directing his intermediaries to Major Durant. Nevertheless, in eleven weeks, Myrna and I will be back at college.

I spent the day in Mr. Garington's shop studying the mortise lock catalogues so that I could identify any by its product number, patent date, size, description, number for the blank needed to make a duplicate key, and other specific features. He wants me to recognize on sight something hidden within the door slab by identifying its exposed parts: escutcheon plate and knob, types of metals used, manufacture's marks on the front piece, strike, dead bolts, and strike plate. Inversely, I must know the product number of the lock unseen when examining its key blank. This is fun! He gave me copies of the catalogues to study. Tomorrow, we take apart several mortise locks, and then start repairing a crate-load of damaged ones. Some of this I know but now Mr. Garington is training me to be an expert like Ella. *[It looks like Myrna will be busy for the next few weeks. Mr. Phales gave her a mystery to solve.]*

After dark, we had another batch of thunderstorms. Lightning knocked out electricity in the Northside for a half-hour. We savored a fleeting spell of quiet.

Wartime Port Unity

The railroad district is busting at the seams. We have yet to become inured to the bustle and racket. North First Avenue is now busy all times of day, every day. The company hired more workers for the yards, mostly laborers, and young ladies are taking clerical jobs once held my men at corporate headquarters. The nearby boarding houses are filling up. New arrivals must find lodgings further out. There is a modern apartment building on Third Avenue nine blocks south of the terminal, accessible by the downtown trolley. Most of the lady officers rent together there. I imagine it is like a dormitory at our college, save not having to walk down the hallway to take a bath. The military is building training camps along the line of the railroad on the cleared woodlands near Northeast Depot in Laine County and opposite the company wharves beyond the ferry landing. Prior to the building of the railroad bridge two miles upriver at Unity Bluff in 1868, the terminus of the southern division occupied the land. It had a station, train sheds, workshops, a foundry, and warehouses. The company laid out a town of more than twenty blocks around it. After the bridge joined the lines, the site no longer served a purpose. It was inconveniently located, and its facilities were redundant since the workshops at Unity Terminal maintained all the locomotives and rolling stock. Once stripped of its machinery and track, nature reclaimed the land. When the military finishes with it, the would-be town will return to scrub. After the state constructs a bridge for automobiles, the ferry and causeway will also go. Mr. McNair is now preparing plans for a depot for motorized vehicles in the upper yards. Presently, they receive shipments at the warehouses on River Street. With the increase in business, the access is becoming constricted. Mr. Levesque regards the director's decision in 1883 to sell the burnt-over land on the south side of the terminal a terrible mistake. Eventually, the company must move the workshops and freight yards elsewhere. It is the ultimate result of their shortsightedness. Automobiles will determine the future of Port Unity. The city fathers must prepare by clearing away the clutter of the last century.

Emma Waddell

Mr. Hennessy sent me to the freight office to meet Miss Waddell. She persuaded me to joined her in the dining hall of the Railroad Hotel for the pork chop and gravy special. It was incredibly good! Emma seems like a cheerful young lady to me. I like her! She has flaxen hair and blue eyes like Ella, a pretty face, and a farmgirl physique. The latter is certainly the result of growing up on her daddy's farm in Northeast Township. It adjoins the Smallwood homeplace. Her grandfather married a Smallwood girl, so the sheriff is a cousin. Like Ella, her mother died of pneumonia; and like me, she was too young to know her. Nevertheless, she wears her mother's rings as a sign of respect. Clarisse Smallwood assume the role of her big sister, teaching Emma dressmaking. "Sheriff Bert" let her read books from his personal library, and his sons took her fishing. She's a tagalong girl! At the Sandyfield school, Emma made perfect grades but was rambunctious. After finishing, the sheriff offered to find her clerical work at corporate headquarters, and she could stay with his big sister Lavinia in exchange for keeping Lucy company. Lucy is not right in the head. Mr. Waddell also hoped that Mrs. Hall would train her to become a proper lady. Emma has a fellow, a foreman working in the classification yard. He also grew up on a farm and she remarked that he is a bit shy.

I wanted Emma to demonstrate her memory skills, so I had her glance over a few pages of my copy of the procedural manual before we had our meal. After pie and coffee, she recited word-for-word the three pages she read. I was impressed! It took me many readings to memorize it. Sheriff Smallwood recruited her to spy in the courthouse jail because of her remarkable memory. She can concentrate on one person speaking normally across a room, ignoring everybody else unless it is too noisy. So, what prompted her to start using her skills to help the sheriff? Emma is fond of dime detective stories and mysteries. They inspired her to start snooping, that is, simply keeping her eyes and ears open for unlawful dealings in Northeast Township, including theft of chickens, selling moonshine, and poaching on posted land. "Sheriff Bert" recognized her many talents and filled out the papers for her private detective credentials. It was a self-serving gesture since he intended to employ her, yet not entirely underhanded since she persuaded him. That said, the sheriff promised her papa to keep her safe. I imagine so! He knows exactly where she is on the weekends. Deputy Phales and Matron Cole oversee her assignments.

Upon returning to Mr. Hennessy's office, I recommended her for training as a station officer. He agreed but thought it best that she continued her work with the sheriff for the time being. This Friday evening, the Major and Deputy Wilkes are taking us out to observe the weekly bacchanalia on North First Avenue. Ella and I must dress in nice summer dresses with our gentlemen in dapper suits.

Emma is another young lady apprenticing in her family's businesses. It irritates me that the sheriff must resort to bureaucratic trickery to utilize her skills because the county commissioners are averse to letting him hire women deputies. [In time, the exigency of the war will jerk them into the modern age and there is no going back... ever.]

Our night out

Friday evening, Deputy Wilkes, and Major Durant took us out for an evening on North First, beginning at seven o'clock and lasting until midnight. I carried along my special velvet bag in the event trouble found us. Our outing began with sandwiches at the dining hall of the Railroad Hotel along with a throng of other hungry folk. This is where the ritual starts after everybody receives their pay. It continues at the Magic Lantern Picture Show. The crowd waiting to get inside was too large, so we continued on to the Walnut Café. It was a marginally respectable establishment

until the management transformed the rear of their building into a ballroom [really a dance hall]. During the day, they close this section to cater to the travelers and those patronizing the shops on North First. The Major ordered coffee and a slice of cake for all of us. The waiter told him they didn't have any of both on hand after five, but he could bring the standard refreshments. Deputy Wilkes nodded. It was an ice-cold, robust, homemade version of ginger ale with a dash of cloves [It's a local favorite during the summer months.] and a tray of toasted slices of buttered bread. All four of us made quick work of this offering and proceeded on to the dance hall. The musicians included old Mr. Boswell on piano, his wife Milly playing the clarinet, and their two daughters on violin and banjo. [I think their names are Dot and Pansy.] They played an assortment of old favorites. Myrna and the Major danced the two-step flawlessly to the Ophelia Rag, inadvertently revealing that they received dance instruction in school. Most of the couples [those who were actually dancing] did the one-step but not gracefully, some loosing track of their steps. The rest held each other and hopped around in circles. All the couples seemed mismatched, like somebody selected their partners by picking numbers from a hat. The whole room smelled like floor wax. The usually overly charming Chester Wilkes was sullen.

"Is there something bothering you, Mr. Wilkes?"

"I tried to reenlist. They said my age, missing toe, and a bad knee makes me a poor choice for infantry. I do fine despite those things. Not good enough. Since I made officer last time, some staff post might work or the military police. In both cases, they could use me here when the camps open... Just to let you know, I would ask you for a dance if I could."

"I would accept if you asked regardless of whether you could. Right now, I am enjoying watching Myrna and Major Durant. They're excellent dance partners. The music from before the war is livelier than... right. So, what are you going to do?"

"I'll take what I can get." I suggested a walk in the evening air.

Once the Walnut Café became crowded, our foursome went for a stroll southward from Walnut Avenue to Commerce Street. Along the way, the seething throng thinned to a few couples and loners heading opposite towards the festivities. The activity in the business district at the city's center ceases at nine with the closing of Gilford's. The lone exception is the *Messenger* office. Two blocks east and one north is the theatre. Performances rarely go past eleven. Otherwise, all is quiet until the morning. Deputy Wilkes took us back by North Third Avenue, a wide tree-lined thoroughfare illuminated by streetlamps which end at Mulberry, the city limits of Port Unity. The street continues to its abrupt end at the inclined plane and then resumes on the north side of the terminal. There are a number of nice residences for a few blocks; but approaching Mulberry, the lots are commercial.

On the opposite side is the deputies' auxiliary station, once a grocery. Mr. Wilkes gave us a tour. It contained a pin with compartments to separate brawlers similar in appearance to a kennel. They held no customers. It was too early. There were several rows of salvaged church pews for the docile catches. Mr. Wilkes introduced us to the deputy and matron managing the store. The deputy remarked that business didn't start to pick up until the legal establishments closed. At that point, the serious drinkers then set out for the back-room saloons scattered throughout the district. There, a person could drink until daybreak, or end up passed out behind a shed robbed of their last penny. Some thieves even rob drunks of their shoes. Scamps prowling Cato Houghton's neighborhoods are in for a surprise. The "committees of public safety" trounce homegrown and outside wrongdoers they come across, and nobody witnesses the act. The prim matron in a white blouse and black sash said a drunk woman could stumble unaccompanied through Houghton's

domain safely unless Demon Pete is driving alongside her. She didn't believe in ghosts but considered the railroad district chatter credible.

We bade the night watch good evening and then proceeded down Mulberry, passing the entrance to the cotton works of Cowan Cotton & Fabric on Second, and straddling the next block, the massive three-story house owned by Lavinia Hall. Myrna cried out in delight, "There's my friend!" Emma Waddell and her beau Ned Moseley were sitting on the porch sipping tea. She invited us to join them.

"Myrna, who is that distinguished gentleman you snagged?"

"This is Major Richard Durant."

"You're a lucky girl! I can see Deputy Wilkes was fishing in the same pond, too! He caught a real beauty."

"That's my sister Ella. I hope you don't mind us stopping by for a moment?"

"We're honored!" A genuine warmth beamed from her. "Hello, everybody, I'm Emma! Oh, this is my fellow Ned. Take a seat and I'll bring out more glasses and the pitcher. It's just sweet, iced tea. Mrs. Hall is a temperance lady, so we behave ourselves." After she went inside to fetch our refreshments, Ned busied himself with arranging our chairs. He was a soft-spoken strapping fellow who seemed exceptionally well-mannered.

"It's an honor to meet you, Major, and ladies. Please take a seat. Can I get you something?" Mr. Wilkes asked him whether Emma was behaving herself. He chuckled.

"I don't see where she has the time to get into trouble. When not working at the freight office, she is tending to Miss Lucy and Sheriff Bert has her doing whatnot but not this weekend. You should know more about that than I do." He glanced at Myrna. "Say, aren't you 'The Girl' the fellows talk about?" I jumped in.

"That's her! Everything they say is true. Remember that legend about secret underground tunnels? Myrna went down into one to take photographs! The snakes didn't bother her. Well, she loves animals. Her pet alligator was getting a bit feisty, so we had to find a new home for him. Nevertheless, we're getting dogs. She is a favorite in the locomotive shop fixing something called Walschaerts Valve Gear." Myrna rolled her eyes. [You're a mess!] The Major then told him about our heroics last summer including my capture of the "ghost lady" burglar. Ned was in the upper yards when all the patrols were trying to chase her down, witnessing her pass by clinging onto a boxcar. When Emma returned, we enjoyed our tea and chatted about all the peculiar goings-on occurring in the railroad district. She amazed us with a detailed list of foul deeds which took place on the North Side since we entered the war. Myrna, who is usually unperturbable, became concerned when her analytical mind started mapping out the occurrences. Most of the dangerous encounters took place along a path leading from corporate headquarters to the cluster of houses where the new company employees board. They were waylaid enroute to and from work. The Major wanted Myrna to assemble the statistics from the sheriff's files and produce a useful map. Deputy Wilkes volunteered to save her steps by compiling the list. He, too, noticed more robberies and assaults occurred in the blocks above the cotton works extending to Sixth, between Rose and Mulberry. Beyond that was Cato Houghton's domain, continuing to Tenth. Ned remarked that he boarded in a house on Eighth, a block from the upper yards. To visit Emma, he walks the path running the length of the north side of the terminal to avoid encountering hoodlums by the direct route on Walnut. Emma knew there were several illegal all-night saloons carrying on business in the same area, but Sheriff Bert had yet to find them. I think Cato's letter might show him the way. At that moment, Miss Waddell returned inside to fetch some cookies. We were settling in for a longer visit. During our conversation, the Major asked whether Emma and Ned ever joined in the Friday

festival on North First. No, they just watched. At most, Ned picked up a bag of sandwiches from the Railroad Hotel dining hall to enjoy with their tea. The couple saved their money. They want to get married.

Joe Niemand

I began my day by meeting Deputy Phales, and then with the Major in tow, we paid a visit to the county engineer's office to examine the architectural plans for the courthouse. When I asked him whether anybody came to see them over the last year, he handed me an attractive hardbound volume printed in 1887.

"Most of the architecture students at the university drop in for one of these – only a dollar! Most of the plans were meticulously redrawn, along with detailed drawings of the exquisite ornaments – See! Isn't that wonderful? – and lots of photographs, a proclamation by the commissioners, a list of the companies supplying the materials and hardware – their advertisements are in the back – contractors and subcontractors, a history of the three previous courthouses with illustrations – at only a dollar, it's a bargain! Want to buy one?"

"Yes!" I placed my dollar on his desk. "Could I have a receipt?"

"Certainly, Miss Durant [*Ha-ha-ha!*], we handle all transactions properly. The proceeds go into the county coffers, so the auditor checks and double-checks. Yes, ma'am! Don't forget to tell your friends. We only have three boxes left of that marvelous volume." He produced his receipt book and commenced filling out my slip. "Oh-my, forgive me, was your first name Mable?"

"Myrna; Miss Myrna Eloise Levesque." He dropped his pen. The Major and Deputy Phales displayed their credentials.

"You're with the railroad."

"That's right. May I examine your book? We're working with the sheriff today trying to catch some rascals." Upon examining the entries, I discovered he sold five books last year. Five? If he wants to get rid of those boxes it might take a while. Regardless, a gentleman who bought a book last June interested me. "Do you remember anything about this Mr. Joe Niemand?"

"Yes, nice young man visiting from up north. Mr. 'Nyman' was so impressed with our courthouse. Architects from everywhere are fascinated by it! He wanted to look at the plans. Why go to the trouble of fetching them when the elevations and floor plans are in the book?" The Major presented the photograph I took of the two arguing men on the platform before the first shots."

"Are either one of these men Mr. Niemand?"

"That's him: the young fellow speaking with the gentlemen with the mustache."

With that settled, I asked him about the mortise locks in the courthouse jail. He told me that the contractors took the entire ironclad oak door including hardware from the disused 1846 county jail when construction on the third floor was running overbudget. They also salvaged from the same place the mortise locks used on the doors leading to the vestibule of the cells and the rear hallway. Whitaker & Blackwell installed the new night latch rim locks on the barred doors leading to the cell wings, mortise locks on the remaining doors, and padlocks on the cells. Before leaving, we purchased a book for Mr. McNair.

On the walk back to the courthouse, I told the gentlemen about something they missed entirely during our visit.

"Joe Niemand... Niemand is German for nobody! He inadvertently left us a clue."

Once back at the courthouse jail, Deputy Phales allowed me to examine the old mortise locks in the great hall and their keys. They were massive wrought iron deadbolt locks of an impressive size lacking a latch bolt mechanism housed in a cast iron case. The doorknob above was merely a

non-turning pull screwed into the wood. I suspected the lock was easy to pick. It opened with a large brass key with an S-shaped key bit having a single cleft cut. The post inside the key was a quarter inch in diameter. Without having the opportunity to examine the lock on the workbench, I could imagine that a domestic foundry manufactured it following the pattern of late-eighteenth century locks. Its chief virtues were its sturdy construction and unique key. Picking it was easy: insert a bent piece of wire, lift the tail piece off its pin, and then slide it back. This is merely based upon my first impressions. I must speak with Mr. Garington and Ella to be sure. At this point, Mr. Phales had Matron Cole show me the women's wing.

The night latch on the barred door leading to the cells opens with a key having a single ward and cleft cut. When turned left, it pulls back the latch; turning the key right engages the stop, thus preventing the latch from moving. The feature discourages somebody from opening the door by inserting a shim between the latch bolt and strike plate to defeat the lock. Handcuffs also have a stop called a double lock for the same reason and to keep them from closing tighter on the prisoner. The door of the vestibule has a standard two bolt mortise lock like the ones we have been repairing in Mr. Garington's workshop. There is another like it on the door to the matron's equipment room. She didn't have time for the rest of my tour but planned to resume it on Thursday.

Today, I met with Mr. Hennessy to report my findings. Our discovery that Joe Niemand was an associate of the auburn lady's dapper gentleman was an exciting revelation! [*Myrna was excited.*] That my [*imagination balloon*] daydreaming directed me to the most probable explanation for her flawless escape also was encouraging. She had help in planning for it. Furthermore, perusing Granddaddy James' German dictionary for absurdly wrong words to use in *The Misadventures of Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight* also proved useful in recognizing a plausible connection to the enemy. Joe might be a foreign spy or sympathizer; likewise, the lady and her gentleman. [*So, what about their adversaries?*] The boss wanted to transmit my discoveries to Mr. Creswell. Whether espionage was involved was for him to determine, not us.

Mr. Hennessy was fascinated by the self-congratulatory book the county commissioned for the opening of the courthouse. They published a guide to breaking into the building or escaping the jail. Nevertheless, seeing that the plans for public buildings are available for viewing in the office of the County Engineer, gathering the intelligence was not a daunting task. Discerning the routines of those working there and obstacles posed by later improvements was more difficult. One must evaluate the site firsthand. Paying a visit to the courthouse jail to speak with a deputy was easy, say, to report something trivial like loose paving bricks. Such complaints would get the spy past the ironclad oak door into the great hall; but to reconnoiter the women's wing, one must be a lady [*an arrested lady to be precise*]. Sheriff Smallwood forbids gentlemen [*including deputies*] from stepping beyond the vestibule. [*The plotters could buy the information from any women who spent a few days in a cell, or even from a former matron.*]

Alrighty, thus far I identified the most direct path out: she escaped the cell, somehow opened the door to the vestibule, entered the great hall, and left by the ironclad door [*in plain view of the night shift deputies on duty.*] Only one deputy is the gatekeeper for the main door, and he has the only key. There is a peephole he uses to identify anybody wanting to gain entry. Yet, I'm sure picking the lock is easy. That's the extent of my contribution to the investigation thus far. Mr. Hennessy thought I was doing well with the assignment. Major Durant agreed. Hurrah! So, how does the lady slip out unobserved?

The jail

I spent the entire morning reviewing the inventory of the jail with Deputy Phales, dutifully recording the pertinent details of specific items in my notebook. Surprise! Each entry contained the manufacturer's number for every lock in the courthouse minus those salvaged from the old jail. The padlocks securing the cells are sturdy cast bronze two and a half-inch single-tumbler railroad locks with keyhole cover and chain. That type of lock dangles from the door of a boxcar. Houghton Metalworks & Scrap made the iron frame beds in the cells. That was my last short day. Tomorrow, I spend an entire shift observing the regular business at the jail. The Major took me to the Walnut Café for lunch. We had their steak and potatoes washed down with their ice-cold spicy ginger ale. Every day since we returned home has been oppressively hot.

Yesterday was a long day. It started with retrieving my credentials from Deputy Phales. All the while, jailors from the men's wing along with a deputy were escorting prisoners to the jail wagon downstairs for its return trip to the county farm. Every Friday, the staff clears the courthouse jail of "customers" inasmuch as possible to make room for the weekend crowd. As a rule, they keep nobody confined in the cells longer than five days. We captured our escape artist lady on a Friday afternoon, and she was due to take a ride to the county farm Saturday morning. The matrons awaken the ladies at six, have them take their morning meal, and then give them a fresh jail dress for the trip. About a half-hour after the men leave in their wagon, the day matron and junior matron bring out the ladies. A deputy and jailor assist in guarding them during the loading. Deputy Phales told me that a jail wagon can hold twelve, but they rarely send ten women, on average six to eight.

When Mr. Hennessy assigns me to duties in the station police office, I chat with Matron Margaret Cole when Chester brings her along to take a lady we have to jail. She is twice my age, say, early forties, about Ella's height, brunette like me, and has a muscular build. Her disposition is always pleasant and occasionally playful, yet all business. We get along fine. After the jail wagon left, Matron Cole picked up her tour where we left off. She unlocked the room off the vestibule of the women's wing, and we entered.

"Here we are, Miss Levesque." The room was much larger than I expected. On the rear wall, there was a large wooden case of bins like those in Gilford's Department Store for sorting clothing. Affixed to the horizontal edge of the top were alphabetical labels; vertically, individual bins had numbered brass tags; all contained folded dresses. The door to the matrons' equipment room was to the right of this case. On the adjacent wall, there was a similar case containing the simplest of cotton undergarments and canvas slippers. On the opposite wall was a shower stall equipped with a cut off section of garden hose – no hot water tap. Stacks of neatly folded towels covered the top of a table alongside the stall. On the wall at the entrance was along table bolted to the floor, attached to it was a case of shelves containing thirty-two numbered boxes, each corresponding to a cell; and lastly, an old-style locked file cabinet to the left of the table. The whole room reeked of the aroma of creosote similar to that of a stack of crossties baking in the summer sun. It was the "stinky soap" manufactured at the county farm. "This is the room where we help the ladies dress for their stay." Matron Cole uses amusing euphemisms when describing aspects of her work. She reminds me of the house mother at our dormitory. "Our jail dresses are quality items; made by the seamstresses at the county farm, they devote special attention to comfort, durability, and crafting their wears to the feminine form. Our 'go to court attire' is tasteful and modest, the cloth being tightly woven heavy cotton dyed solid grey. The same comes in black and white stripes for taking a ride and work." [*Margaret dreams of owning a dress shop.*] She removed a folded dress from one of the bins and placed it unfolded upon the front table. "This is all that the gals wear in the courthouse

jail. It's lighter and less becoming [*that's funny!*] but very practical for the sultry season. Feel free to examine it." It is a long, black striped, cotton sack with large holes cut out of the end for arms and head, no buttons, no tapering for the waist, no belt, and it fell at hand's length below my knee. "The ladies are issued a fresh one every morning. Want to try one on? I have your size."

"First, tell me about your usual procedures."

"When the deputies bring one in, it takes two matrons to get her ready. Beforehand, he relieves her of the obvious conveyors of dangerous items and contraband, namely, bag, coat, and hat." She pulled down one of the numbered boxes from the shelves. "I search them thoroughly, inventory the bag along with all its harmless contents, and place it in the box. The same holds true for anything we find in the pockets. The coat and hat receive numbered tags, and we store them in a locked wardrobe in our equipment room. After the deputy unlocks her bracelets, the lady removes all her clothing, shoes, jewelry, and we check her hair for pins and the like. Sorry about wrinkled blouses but we try our best. There is a check list, so we note any distinguishing marks, scars, moles, tattoos, and abnormalities. Most submit to the indignity without complaint, though they feel otherwise; a few give us grief. Your Miss Cusack comes to mind. Fortunately, our wing has a comfortable padded cell and new straitjackets in three sizes. A few hours of thoughtful contemplation do wonders for excitable nerves, even the hellcat lost her fight. She didn't reignite until the next day. To save our sanity, we sent her to the cells for special prisoners at the county farm by automobile. The mystery lady was due to go there, but only because Tom thought it better to sidestep any risky maneuvers she might throw our way. Besides, the county farm is more secure and has modern facilities. Regular prisoners awaiting trial stay in their own compound. It has hot and cold running water, flushing toilets, shower stalls, a spacious courtyard to mill about, and hot meals. The ladies don't need to be in their cells until bedtime. Nobody who knows better complains about going there after staying here."

"It sounds delightful!" She laughed.

"Ask Tom for the paperwork when you're ready to sample the accommodations for a few days, so, continuing with the usual: after hosing down in the stall in the corner and scrubbing with our soap, the prisoner puts on her dress. Then, I fit her out with some of our special bracelets. All our ladies must wear them when outside a cell. Then, we take her back. That's exactly what happened when we assumed charge of the mystery gal. Tom wrote 'special precautions' in her file because you folks suspected that she was that daredevil acrobat who broke into the station. We weren't chancing a repeat, so her bracelets were staying on until we took her out to the county farm." Hmm, the lady had another obstacle to overcome. [*Defeating the cell lock came first; escaping the women's wing was next. Prior to entering the vestibule, she didn't need to bother with the cuffs.*]

"Ready to see our nook?" The similarity between this room and the one we left was startling: same case of bins, same shower stall with garden hose, same stack of towels, and same table with shelves of boxes. Differing was the commercially manufactured soap, the bins held uniform dresses for the matrons, and there were three tall, cabinets against the left wall. "We have two locked wardrobes for the matrons' street clothes, another for the prisoners' coats and hats, and this cabinet for our equipment. The shelves of lockboxes secure the matron's loose personal items. I discourage them from bringing in anything unnecessary because the shift matron must record it in her ledger. After having them remove all but their undergarments, she checks their hair for pins, and then they can put on their uniform dresses. There is a final inspection, and then she issues them keys and equipment, all accounted for at the end of the shift. Nothing comes in or goes out unrecorded. Want to try on a matron's dress? I have your size."

“Can I wear it for the rest of my shift?”

“Not this time. Only after you start matron training can I issue you a uniform for a full shift.” Am I receiving matron training? “Besides, if you’re spending most of the time in the hall with Tom, you should stay in your uniform.”

“What uniform? I dressed like the lady at the deputy station, black skirt with matching jacket, white blouse, and black sash.”

“She handles paperwork. There isn’t a uniform for lady deputies because officially we have none, but Sheriff Bert thinks what you wear is perfect!” What?

“The skirt needs more pockets.” She unlocked the equipment cabinet.

“On these pegs are rings of keys for doors and cells. Since you’re our locksmithing lady, I know you’ll be delighted to study them. The brass tag attached to the ring has a number, so we know who signs for keys. These separate rings have keys for the bracelets and behind this inner door we have our beautiful polished red oak sticks. Their decoratively embossed leather belts have a brass buckle and holding ring. Look at that shine! The sticks are perfectly balanced, too. Hanging from this peg we keep our shiny new nickel-plated [*connected adjustable locking steel*] bracelets for attending court including a sweet matching pair for the lady’s ankles. [*The manufacturers of the equipment must hire Matron Cole to write advertisements.*] The crates below contain those matching sets the ladies wear when taking a ride to the county farm, thirty-two in total, one for each cell. Each having a brass tag attached to the link stamped with “C.H.” and a number so we get them back. We call them charm bracelets.” [*That’s funny!*] “This drawer contains the pairs the shift matron issues to her staff, and in the drawer below are the straitjackets. Here’s your size. Want to try it on?”

“Yes. I find practical demonstrations especially enlightening.”

“Remove your jacket first.” In no time, she had me strapped in nicely. I’ll refrain from describing a certain particular because its unladylike (though quite effective). “How’s that?”

“I’m not getting loose, that’s for certain! No matter: I’m contemplating thoughtfully – ha-ha-ha! [*I need one for our magic act.*] So, we can dismiss the possibility that the lady brought something with her to pick the locks?”

“Yes, the shift matrons keep the equipment room locked and the front room stays clean. Anything the matrons bring inside this room goes out with them.”

“That leaves the contents of the cells.”

“Two buckets, a wash basin, and a bed: that is all; there isn’t room for more.”

“That leaves the bed. Can I see one?”

“Not this time. You must make a clandestine examination, so our ladies are unlikely to figure out what you’re doing. Otherwise, we can’t chance it. However, since you’re a topnotch playactor, I’ll let you pretend to be a matron in training for a shift or even a prisoner. I don’t recommend either of those choices when we have a couple of those beds stored across the street in the old jail. You know, seeing that you did a sweet job of tricking Miss Cusack into giving up her man, you might as well ask him about those papers – not for this – but for something down the road. Your sister signed up last year.” Tom has everything you need, even the special assignment forms [*for locking you in a cell*]. Speak with him after we finish.” The papers concerned participating in covert investigations. That is the part about this work I like the best, but Mr. Buchanan would not approve. All the same, I wanted to sign up.

“Tell me more about the old jail.”

“The county is using the first floor as offices, mechanics’ garage, and we park our vehicles inside the walled in courtyard. The county stores everything kept from the earlier courthouse along

with obsolete furnishings and equipment. It's like a jumbled museum. Some of the junk goes even further back to the first two courthouses. Ask Tom to take you over some afternoon when were not busy. Tell me how you caught Marcia Lamb." Uh-huh, she was keeping me strapped in.

Deputy Phales said we didn't have time to visit the old jail, but we could venture over there on a Saturday morning. Busy? Nothing much happened after the midday arrival of the jail wagons for the afternoon session of court. I sat at a desk in the great hall studying my notes. Eventually, I asked about the papers. The first described clandestine investigation and then explained its hazards. I have first-hand knowledge of several. It continues with a boilerplate statement releasing the county from liability should some mishap befall me. I signed. Let Mr. Buchanan not like it. I am a mature woman capable of making up my own mind. Deputy Phales stamped it "approved" and added his signature. It was now official. Next, he filled out a form which permitted me to receive matron training. I signed, Matron Cole signed, "Approved," he signed. I could now wear a matron's uniform and enter the women's wing. Unfortunately, "not this time." We didn't get around to the other form because business picked up. Shortly after five a deputy brought in the first customer, an extremely drunk young man who could barely walk. Thereafter, the number of arrests increased over the next four hours until the total rose to nineteen, seven women and twelve men. After the clearing out, the women's wing still had twenty-six cells available; the men's wing was larger and could accommodate forty-two more. Deputy Phales sent me to the "dressing room" to assist Matron Cole and her junior matron, mostly making entries into the log for all the new ladies, especially the tag numbers. She insisted upon consistency: where possible, cell number, box number, and tag number must match. During a lull, I flipped back to the entries for Friday, July 28, 1916. They put the auburn-haired lady in *Cell 16*, and the tag on her cuffs was C.H. 16. I asked Matron Cole whether they recover that pair. They didn't. If she could open the barred door to the women's wing it would be easy to pick the mortise locks on the doors of the "changing room" and the matron's equipment room, the cabinet lock is nothing special. There are keys to her cuffs and the door leading to the great hall inside it so why not use them? She could then put on a matron's uniform and get past the deputy manning the ironclad door to the hallway. Why not? Unless the spies obtained intelligence from somebody familiar with the equipment room she wouldn't know. That's one of my hypotheses out the window. The lady picked all the locks in a direct line to the great hall in her cuffs (I could do that.) but getting through the ironclad door left her exposed unless one of her associates picked its lock from the outside. Only then was it a matter of hiding until the deputies on duty were not looking. Recall that she prowled the hall of the station and annex without detection until Marcia upset her plans. It still baffles me how she acquired additional details concerning Mr. Creswell's itinerary without making another visit to the station offices.

Now, I understand Matron Cole's sales talk and use of euphemisms. The seven ladies that the deputies brought in ranged from terrified to combative, but most gave way to resignation, enduring the humbling "usual procedures." For three, it was their second or third time. Their crimes in some way involved alcohol. My experience as *Rowdy Room* hostess proved useful. While keeping the log, I coaxed the ladies into some benign chatter while Matron Cole took inventory of their property. Her assistant, Matron Olivia Stibbes, distracted them the whole time with small talk and several well-practiced entertaining stories while going about her duties. Even so, the ladies in jail endure a measure of unavoidable humiliating treatment which was difficult to witness. I found it intensely sobering. Miss Cole noted that the inspection of the matrons which occurs in the adjoining room is a less than dignifying ritual that scrubs away pretension. Once they relinquish the trappings of social status and put on their uniforms all are equal, the opposite of Mr. Hennessy's

desire to have the women of his department attired stylishly. As we entered the second lull of the evening, Matron Cole sent me back to Deputy Phales.

On Saturday, there was another run of jail wagons to make room for the evening's haul. Most of those arrested were payday revelers who let drink go to their heads. Unless they committed a crime other than public drunkenness, the judge would impose a fine. If they could not pay, it was another few days at the county farm. Deputy Phales took me home at nine. Along the way, we stop by the auxiliary station to see how Chester was doing. Business was going well, but the rush would not start until the legitimate establishments closed for the evening. Once home, Ella reheated dinner for me. I shared my notes over coffee with her since Ella would finish the assignment at some point in the future. Drats again! Mr. Hennessy wanted me to return to Mr. Garington's shop to complete my report. On Wednesday, I join Ella at the station police office. The Major told Ella that Mr. Hennessy thought our findings prove that the joint agreement is productive, but he considered further progress on the investigation unlikely at this time. He wants me to take my final examination to become certified as a station officer before Ella leaves for New Mexico. I was ready to take it upon our arrival, but my assignment delayed it.

I was fascinated by Myrna's hypothesis that the iron bedframe in the auburn-haired burglar's cell provided her with the material to fashion her lockpicks. Boldly, I recommended that we take advantage of having the McNair boy's Model 30 at our disposal. We should pay a visit to Houghton Metalworks to investigate how they made the beds. Myrna prefers to wait until Deputy Phales takes her on a tour of the old jail. All the same, we cannot do either until next Saturday because Uncle Roscoe has other work for us.

Cato's help

Sheriff Smallwood conducted successful raids in the railroad district Saturday morning, arresting the sellers of bootleg liquor before the evening celebration. Excellent work! Without the information Cato Houghton provided us, he wouldn't know where to start.

Myrna joins me at the station police office on Wednesday. Good! Major Durant wants to administer her final examination on Thursday. I have little doubt that she will pass with high marks. Our girl spent the winter studying for it at the expense of her French.

Uncle Roscoe sent me a new recruit. For the time being, I intend to utilize Myrna's mock miscreant skills to train our new Rowdy Room hostess. [That's my job!] Matron Cole had the same idea it seems. I can only imagine Myrna's dismay when Margaret asked about gathering up her skirt to secure the bottom strap of the straitjacket between her legs. [I told you not to tell the ladies!] As expected, our girl agreed because some magicians escape from them. Myrna couldn't. [I wasn't trying! If you get one for our show, that's different. I'm still waiting for you to show me how to escape from modern handcuffs.] Since employing women officers in the fall, the records room is in fine shape, not a file out of place. Liz did a superb job with instructing them in managing documents; Captain Johnston shaped them into excellent officers. Sergeant Bates assumed command of the lower yards patrol after Mr. Quince joined up. He enjoys being outside after five years of station duty. From his recent letter we learned that Phillip is studying everything about the wireless at camp. He misses Myrna. That goes both ways. Louis writes us often, and Frank adds the postscript. The "bug girl" [entomologist] receives his tomes.

Uncle Roscoe and Liz are taking us to the theatre on Friday. I sent a note in the mail to Cato asking him to meet me on the staircase of the mezzanine during the first intermission if he is

attending. I must find out more about those iron beds in the courthouse jail. [I'll distract the muckety-mucks.]

I am back at Unity Station with Ella, the Major, and ... Captain Johnston! Hurrah! Ladies, you remember Captain Johnston. No? When I was little, he's the officer that the Major sent out into the terminal to find me when I was exploring. That was the easy part. Bringing me home to "fire-breathing" Mrs. Keane took uncommon bravery!

"Here I am, sir, just in time; ready to resume my former duties as night-watch-lady, Rowdy Room hostess, and mock miscreant!"

"Finally, Miss Myrna Levesque decided to grace us with her presence!"

"So, where are the lady officers? I want to meet them!"

"Ella is training one, Officer Wilhelmina Dudley. She goes by Mina since the 'Wilhelm' part doesn't go over well these days. She's new, number eight. Let's start on your paperwork."

Tomorrow, I take my final examination. Within a week, I'll be a certified station officer. All the same, Mr. Hennessy wants me to receive more practical instruction. The Major thought Ella was perfect for the task – oops! My sister has always been my best teacher, but her lessons are always more intensive than she leads me to expect.

To start, Myrna can help me teach Mina how to manage records. [Drats!]

Myrna's debut

Mr. Hennessy took us to the theatre tonight. This time, both of us dressed in our finery. I worked for an hour brushing, winding, twisting, coiling, and improvising until my hair was perfectly set atop my head. It stayed up, too! I wore my mother's short ruby necklace with matching brooch along with my grandmother's signet ring. Ella wears a copy of it. Unfortunately, I decided to forgo my glasses so the entire play was a blur. They were in my bag, but it seemed best to continue pretending to be the version of me which is sometimes beautiful. No matter: playing roles on stage without them is typical for me. Mr. Buchanan and Liz joined us. Both thought my efforts to dress to impress was a success – ha-ha-ha! Sam Culver spoke with us in the lobby before the play. Mr. Hennessy introduced us as the Levesque sisters. For a moment, he looked puzzled. Sisters? "Sir, allow me to introduce Miss Myrna Eloise Levesque." Oops! Ella smiled mischievously.

The bed

During the first intermission, Mr. Houghton met me on the steps of the mezzanine. After I told him that we needed an iron bed like those his father manufactured for the courthouse jail he chuckled.

"How about something better?"

"We need it for solving a case."

"I thought so. We purchased those beds at an auction when a northern sanatorium was undergoing improvements, two-hundred and twenty in total. Our company merely repaired and painted them. They are not the original beds from 1887 that my daddy designed. The county ran short on funds before we finished making the cells, even then they're smaller than planned and have no receptacle for installing a door lock. The beds they used were cots with a wooden frame. In 1911, the county decided the jail needed 'institutional beds' but were unwilling to buy them new. We gave them refurbished ones, ninety-six for the courthouse, and a hundred for the prison farm at a discount. Of the remaining twenty-four, we used all but one for parts. It was the first,

made to show the commissioners what they were buying. It's disassembled, still in the lightweight crate we built to make carrying them up three floors of stairs less taxing. You can have it. We'll deliver it in the morning. How does that sound?"

"Wonderful! I see you're attending the theater alone tonight. May I sit with you?" [Uh-oh!]

"Shouldn't you rejoin your party?"

"At present, you'll find them preoccupied with showing off my beautiful younger sister. She is the statuesque brunette standing with the magnificent Miss Elizabeth Buchanan."

"Indeed. I was surprised to learn the two of you were not one in the same. Please forgive me for making such a careless assumption."

"No apology necessary, sir. It's my fault for not introducing myself when we first met."

"She bears a close resemblance to her grandmother. What do you think of this play?"

"It's a play?"

"In name only. The local theatre club doesn't perform plays. They decided dramatic form is an unnecessary obstacle to incoherence. These 'benefit performances' benefit anybody with the good sense to cement deals in the lobby whether they be financial, political, or romantic. Shall we take a stroll around the block to pass the time between that horrid banshee's notes."

"I'd be delighted, sir." [Ella! You're drifting into uncharted waters.]

Myrna performed flawlessly in her role as corporate matriarch last evening. She was every bit as regal as her grandfather and beautiful. Of course, she is beautiful! I don't think that means much to her. It's all playacting. This morning, Myrna put on one of her drab dark blue cotton dresses, tied back her hair in a ponytail, and struggled into those well-worn lace-up leather boots she wears in her workshop. Nobody who saw her last night would recognize her today.

Cato's men delivered the bed this morning through the side gate, and I signed for it before Mrs. Keane realize something different had infringed upon her well-ordered routine.

"Ella! What's in that crate?"

"A bed."

"You purchased a bed without informing me?"

"Yes. It's for Myrna."

"Myrna has a bed! Why does she need another? Besides, that looks awfully small for that girl. You ordered the wrong size. Send it back!"

"It's three-foot-two by six and three inches."

"That's too small! I'll have to order special bedding for it. Send it back!"

"It's for the basement workshop. Myrna has been napping on the chaise lounge she brought down from the upstairs parlor."

"So, that's what happened to it! Put it back!"

"Sawdust settled on it."

"We'll have that stuff spread everywhere. Leave it be! I cannot understand why both of you are set upon and determined to reduce this fine house to shambles. Flour makes dust, too. Don't think for one minute that I can't tell that you girls are back making cookies. Messy-messy-messy girls!" She shook her head in disgust and tightened her fists. "Good Lord Almighty, you headstrong unruly tomboys want to drive me to the grave."

"I'll tell the Major. He'll be happy to bring by his automobile when you're ready."

"Leave that old devil out of it. Ah-ha! I know what you're up to: Myrna wants a bed for entertaining her gentlemen!"

“No, but I’ll pass on your recommendation.” [Ha-ha-ha!]

“Well, get on with it! I want to know what kind of junk you’re bringing into this house.”

Myrna brought out her crowbar and we commenced uncrating the mystery as her ladyship scowled. Once removed, we marveled at its simplicity. The end pieces consisted of steel tubing with two bends forming top and legs, a half-inch rod connecting the legs passed into holes on the inner side and welded in place. Riveted to the legs were brackets for receiving the one-piece frame. Both end pieces were identical except for the position of the brackets. Inverted “L” shaped beams form the frame, the exterior corner hardware ended in a molded button for holding the frame to the legs. When slid home into the channel of the bracket the bed held together solidly without additional bracing. Holes drilled through the interior lip of the frame were for receiving heavy gauge steel wire springs with hook-bends on both ends. The springs connected to an angularly bent stiff wire with a closed hook at each end, which in turn held the outermost wires of the galvanized mesh. Lastly, one-inch steel strips interwoven through the mesh lengthwise kept it rigid. Houghton Metalworks added hardware at the end of the legs for bolting the bed to the floor, and bolt holes through the brackets and frame for keeping prisoners from taking the bed apart. A thick coat of green enamel coated every surface of the bed except the mesh and strips.

“That’s ugly! Send it back!”

“Who is going to see it?” She paused to think.

“Alright, where’s the mattress?”

Mrs. Keane didn’t stop interrogating us until we took our “green monstrosity” through the outside entrance to the basement. Clearly, the bed contained all the materials for making lockpicks. The triangular bent steel wire connecting the mesh to the springs and galvanized strips looked promising, and the drill hole for the springs could serve as a jig for bending the wire. In preparation, we assembled from our splendid collection of locks those closely approximating or matching those in the women’s wing of the courthouse jail: padlock, and night latch. We had nothing like the antique mortise locks for the ironclad entrance door and great hall except a barn door rim lock and front door mortise lock, both dating from the early-1800s. We could open all of them with standard manufactured lockpicks and Myrna’s homemade set. The floors of the courthouse are concrete supported by a steel beam skeleton, only left exposed on the third floor. Despite the building’s massive brick and stone exterior, steel girders bear the interior weight. We determined that the concrete floor was the only surface available to “Aloisa” which might be useful for abrading metal. Myrna procured a one-foot square of smooth surface concrete for our experiment. Immediately, we encountered a problem: neither one of us could open with bare hands the closed hooks at the ends of the triangular bends of wire attached to the mesh. The eighth-inch steel wire was too stiff. We needed a tool to pry it open. So, what did “Aloisa” have at her disposal that would work? Myrna’s notes on the jail inventory included three items for the cells: two metal buckets and a commonplace enameled basin.

At this point, we stopped to ponder the problem. The bed had all the right materials to make suitable lockpicks for a much larger variety of locks than the problem presented. For example, I could file down sections of the one-inch steel strips to craft a dandy pair for opening three and four lever locks. Needless to say, I would need a hacksaw, set of files, and a vice. Since none of that was available in jail, we could scratch the strips. The spring pad on the cell and the rim lock of the door were single tumbler so a set of two bent wire picks would open both, one to lift the tumbler and another for pushing back the tumbler pin plate. Disengaging the stop on the rim lock only required one of them. Alrighty, we have an abundance of sturdy steel wire in three gauges yet lacked something so simple as a screwdriver to pry open the closed hooks and turns of the mesh.

So, how did she do it? The only possible method I could imagine was removing one of the springs and using its opened hooked ends as a pry. Recalling that Matron Cole told me that scrubbing down with the stinky soap extended the time between changing the bedsheets, I devised a technique for separating the angular piece connected to the mesh from the spring: twisting the bedsheet into a makeshift rope, passing it through the outer three rectangles of the mesh closest to the angular connector with the ends hanging down; then, with back on the floor, knees bent, and feet planted on the frame, pulling both ends of the rope. In this way, my legs exerted the force. I fetched a sheet from the laundry room to try. It worked! The angular connector moved far enough in my direction to drop from the hook. It was then easy to remove the spring from its hole in the frame. Wonderful! “The Girl” did it again! Did the hook end of the spring pry open the closed hooks of the angular connector? No. I needed to abrade the end of the spring hook so it would fit inside the bend. Oops! Since I must abrade the end on the surface of a concrete paver, the angle wouldn’t work. However, Ella discovered that the spring hook pried open the ends of the smaller gauge horizontal wires. By passing it over and under the second vertical wire of the mesh repeatedly she unwound the turns. At the next intersecting winding, Ella bent the wire back and forth vigorously until it broke. We had a length of seven and a half inches to make a pick. It was time to get ready for dinner. *[It took six hours to remove one piece of wire!]*

Today, after our midday meal, Myrna and I changed into our “feeding the hogs dresses” as Mrs. Keane calls our drab cotton play clothes, and then went down to the workshop. Myrna, hands confined in a pair of Tower double locks like those used in Sheriff Smallwood’s department [our officers use the stylish Bean Patrolman cuffs – nice!], repeated the procedure we decided upon yesterday. Working quietly as possible, she accomplished the task in about forty minutes. It took me more than an hour to do the same in near total darkness. Both of us found twisting the bedsheets into a rope difficult with the span separating our hands limited by three links; likewise, unwinding the wire and working it until it broke was painstakingly tedious in cuffs since we endeavored to perform the tasks quietly. It took us two hours to harvest two seven-and-a-half-inch lengths of wire. It was Myrna’s turn working in the ‘inconveniences.’ She used the hole in the frame to make the bends for the picks. One with a slight bend for reaching upward from the bottom of the keyhole to lift the tumbler; the other, bent at a right angle, moves the lever that in turn repositions the pin plate. On both locks, the bottom portion of the key bit contacts the latter and the top part lifts the tumbler plate, a ward separates the two, so we insert the picks in that order. Our picks needed a loop in the other end of the wire for applying pressure and positioning. She accomplished this by using the button stub of the frame fasteners and the channel on the bracket into which it slides home as a jig. All that remained was abrading the rounded surface on the front, reverse, and bottom of the picks so both had room to pass over each other. During this process, it became apparent why “Aloisa” didn’t abrade a piece of wire thinner to fashion a pick for her cuffs.

I can think of better ways of opening these locks than this awkward wire method but sometimes you must work with what you have. Filing the surface of steel wire is an arduous task; the same on smooth concrete takes double the time and effort; in handcuffs, the labor becomes slow and torturous. Though I am tinkering constantly, I wear gloves to protect my larger than average but definitely graceful lady hands. Not this time! Today’s enterprise left me with sore fingers, rough skin, scratches, and chafed wrists. Undeniably, the “required inconveniences” performed remarkably well at satisfying their intended purpose: discouraging wearers from using their hands to make mischief or anything else. I only hoped that the wires wouldn’t break. After two hours, our picks were ready. So, Ella, do I get my dollar? *[No. This is our project.]* Uh-huh, I

knew she wouldn't. [My turn: opening all four locks with two picks, handcuffed, in full light and near darkness. They worked fine!] Splendid! That was enough for one day.

We were too tired and dirty to take advantage of having the kitchen to ourselves for the evening, so we cleaned up and reheated what Mrs. Beech left for our late meal, Mrs. Keane's special recipe for tasteless boiled beef and potatoes. Fortunately, Mr. Levesque brought home a peach pie when out on his afternoon wanderings. Thursday, I leave for New Mexico. During my absence, Myrna, and Liz switch places. [Drats!] To satisfy her desire to learn my escape techniques, I gave her my Tower pair and a key to figure them out on her own. [Drats again!] She'll be surprised to learn that they are easier to pick than our locks but a bit harder when used in the manner prescribed by the manual, namely, hands behind the back. To be on the safe side, I hid the other key in the house in the event she finds herself in a bind. Myrna blithely blunders into binds regularly. Once she is certified, the Major will issue her a pair for her velvet bag [Liz wants her women officers to look sophisticated] so she'll have the proper pair for work. Out of a concern that the mechanisms might get damaged, Major Durant does not want us picking them. However, we can carry a hidden key for unanticipated situations.

I intend to repair the bed so let's order a mattress. It is a bit small for me but perfect for when Liz stops by for a visit. She enjoys lounging in my cool workshop on torrid days.

Monday, June 18, 1917. Major Durant said Myrna made a perfect grade on her examination. [Hurrah!] He is filling out the paperwork to finalize her certification.

Mr. Hennessy wants me to write up a report of our weekend findings including drawings and photographs. Sheriff Smallwood and Mr. Creswell will receive copies. It must be ready for his meeting with the sheriff on Thursday. Is that all? Since Ella will be travelling, I must present the report. What?

"Also, the department has a surplus bed stored in the old jail. Deputy Phales is bringing it over so you can demonstrate how the prisoner removed the wire and fashion the lockpicks without tools; and bring your locks to show how well they work. [Oh-no!]

"I'll get my uniform dress dirty!"

"In that case, wear the departmental uniform you have for working with the sheriff."

"There isn't such a thing. That's my best white blouse and walking skirt!"

"Wear that and bring a blanket to spread out on the floor to preserve it."

"Who is carrying over my concrete paver?"

"Oh, that might get messy." That's right! "Use the picks you already fashioned for that part of the demonstration."

Myrna's performance

Thursday, June 21, 1917. Ella left this morning. Tuesday night, she helped me type up the report and take the photographs. Mr. McNair developed the film and made prints in triplicate Wednesday morning. I sketched two pages of illustrations showing how the lockpicks work. Mr. Hennessy gave me a few more days to draw a nicer set for Mr. Creswell. Last night, I made an excellent pick for escaping the Tower cuffs. A clip makes it easy to conceal within my tangles – ha-ha-ha!

The first floor of the courthouse has a large room where the county commissioners hold monthly public meetings. They sit at a long table atop a platform during the proceedings. This is where I delivered my report. Fronting the platform, Deputy Phales and Matron Cole spread out my

blanket, and then placed upon it the bed complete with mattress and sheets. Excellent! This was a windfall opportunity to give a performance. After removing my jacket and shoes, I had Deputy Phales examine my Tower cuffs to verify that they matched those used in the courthouse jail and their locking mechanism functioned as designed. After he closed them around my wrists and double-locked them, I removed the sheet, carefully twisted it into a rope, and then wove it through the wires. Separating the spring from the mesh took me a mere moment, all accomplished in one smooth continuous motion. This was fun! My volunteer assistant rolled up the mattress so my esteemed audience could observe how I removed the section of wire, once again, making the task seem effortless. This time, the wire didn't scratch me. After using the frame as a jig to shape what I retrieved, I performed some sleight-of-hand by producing the originals in my right hand to compare with the new. No small feat in handcuffs. With Deputy Phales holding each of the four locks, I picked all of them in quick succession. Bravo! Everybody clapped. Quickly, I removed the special new pick from my hair, and escaped the handcuffs in seconds! Sheriff Smallwood stood up.

"Remarkable performance! Who could have imagined that the beautiful Myrna Levesque who enraptured theatre-goers last Friday was a professional escape artist?" Everybody. "What prompted you to acquire such an unusual craft?"

"Thwarting kidnappers; however, my sister and I enjoy performing delightful parlor tricks at our college. Watch this: I press my hands together and... *Voila!* A deck of cards." Mr. Hennessy jumped into the discussion to prevent it from veering off topic. He started off with that business in the joint agreement about "provide useful assistance through sharing the expertise of capable personnel." Now, we proved that the lady burglar could escape without assistance from a turncoat on the night staff. Sheriff Smallwood agreed. Now, how could he remedy the problem? We suggested tightening the mesh loops and then applying solder would make it difficult to remove the wires; switching out the antique locks with modern three-bolt mortice locks with paracentric keyways; replacing the night latch with a four-tumbler, mortise deadbolt opened with a flat key on both sides; and using six-lever padlocks on the cell doors. Sheriff Smallwood told us that replacing door locks was not a problem, the cell padlocks must wait, and improving the beds can progress gradually. He was satisfied with my work on identifying Joe Niemand and the mystery lady's escape. "Well done!" At this point, I told them that my study was not complete. I must see whether the picks work on the antiquated locks in the great hall and ironclad door. No. However, there are ones like it in the old jail. Deputy Phales could take me there after the meeting. What about examining the bed in *Cell 16* to see whether wires were missing? I had yet to see the women's wing. He was about to send Matron Cole to check, but he would allow me if Mr. Hennessy approved. That was fine providing Deputy Phales brought me home. "This will go past six, I expect a few hours longer. We'll see that she gets dinner." The boss said he would tell Granddaddy James not to wait for me.

My visit to the old jail was fascinating! Built in 1846, this was the county's first building of size constructed entirely of locally made brick. It is four-stories, occupying a half-block. A special courtyard occupies an equal extent, and surrounding the whole block, a ten-foot brick wall. Presently, the first-floor houses offices and in the rear, a mechanic's garage. The county uses the courtyard for parking its vehicles. I asked Deputy Phales why the commissioners decided to use the third floor of the courthouse as a jail rather than modernize the much larger old one. He told me that the county put its money in the new facilities at the prison farm. The courthouse jail was a brief stop on the way there. Nevertheless, the first two floors of the old jail have modern plumbing and electricity. When the former becomes too expensive to maintain, the commissioners might

consider resuming the improvements. We ascended the steps in the central hall to the second-floor balcony, and then entered a maze of hallways, all lined with flat iron doors opening into spacious rooms. These were the cells filled with sundry items accumulated over a hundred and twenty years. Most of it was furniture from the several previous courthouses but there were crates of records dating back to 1805. They are destined for the state archives eventually. I could continue with a description of what I saw, most of it fascinating, but the purpose of my visit was testing our lockpicks. We climbed the stairs to the empty fourth floor. It had an ironclad door at the entrance and within, the whole hallway had solid oak doors with the mortice locks like those in the great hall of the courthouse jail. Mr. Phales told me that the builders ran out of iron when they fitted out this floor. The ironclad door in the courthouse jail once barred the rear entrance to the corridor. He removed a ring of large brass and iron keys from a cabinet on the wall. I recognize the one with the S-shaped bit. Alrighty, time to try our picks. With some effort, I unlocked the ironclad door after Mr. Phales locked it. We repeated the procedure with four doors in the hallway. Good enough! Time for my visit to the women's wing.

On returning to the courthouse jail, Deputy Phales asked me whether I wanted to make my examination of *Cell 16* in the guise of a matron or a prisoner. I chose prisoner because it might take a while and I was curious about what it was like for Aloisa. Additionally, I thought a liberal dose of degradation might make me more empathetic. Being inquisitive about the experiences of others gets me into binds. He told me not to make lockpicks or say a word about what I was doing. This was my first covert assignment. I understood, and then surrendered my lockpicks including the one in my hair. "You made it? This is nice!" Yes, it's quite dainty. "Margaret will find it but not the deputy who arrested you." Arrested me? "Special precautions?" I said yes. How would I know whether I could reach the lock through the bars? Matron Cole told me that Houghton Metalworks constructed the cells from crisscrossing flat iron. If my cuffed hands couldn't reach the lock through the bars at the appropriate angle our work is out the window. "To the end of your shift or through the night?" Definitely to the end of the shift! I had to be in the office by nine o'clock. He signed, I signed, all done. "After Margaret gets you ready, she'll enter the time there, sign here, and the bottom of the form, sign under this paragraph. You're in voluntary custody until nine o'clock, and not before. It's necessary because we are responsible for you." I understood. He then sent me back to Matron Cole.

Having described the "usual procedures" previously and witnessed it, there is no need to go into details. Matron Cole and Matron Stibbes chatted with me pleasantly during my undressing, went through their checklist, asked me embarrassing questions, found my mole, searched my hair thoroughly, confiscated my glasses, entered my particulars into the log, and had me hose down and scrub with stinky soap. Despite their warning not to use too much, I did. Mr. Hennessy will put me in quarantine for a week! Yes, it was humiliating, but I was willing to endure embarrassment for the chance to put my conclusions to the test. Aside from that, it was a unique opportunity to enhance my acting skills through authentic experience. After putting on my jail dress, Margaret picked out a shiny pair of go-to-court bracelets for me. "Want to back out?" Not me! I signed. They took me through the barred doors. Goodness! It was hot! The matron on duty had an unbuttoned collar and rolled up sleeves. Her hair was soaking! Stretched out on the cool concrete floor of their cells, the ladies napped. "This one is special. We are taking her out in a few hours. Lock her bracelets to the bars before bringing in her meal. She's quick with those long fingers. No chitchat! Just leave her be until I come back." Matrons Cole and Stibbes locked me in *Cell 16*. Before she left, I reached through the eight-inch square of the crossed bars and grasped the lock. Uh-huh, Aloisa could pick it! Matron Cole took hold of my hands. "Don't let her see you do anything like

that! She doesn't know. Behave yourself!" With those words, she left. Immediately, I stretched out on the floor on my back and peeked under the bed. The spring was dangling from its hole and two wires of the mesh were missing. I also found a patch on the floor beneath the bed where she abraded the wires. Our work paid off! We figured it out... So, what was I going to do for the next three and a half hours? Having a visceral appreciation of every aspect of her situation, I conjured up scenarios leading to a favorable outcome after she set foot outside the courthouse. It was an all-consuming exercise which sent my imagination aloft, leaving a basting shell behind.

When Matrons Cole and Stibbes came for me, perspiration drenched every inch of my body (my hair, soaked, my skin, slippery; my dress, dripping) and the aroma of jailhouse soap was more powerful than when I washed with it. Matron Coles said it covers up the natural odors. No, it covers up everything! My dinner was a sandwich and peach, but the smell of crossties overpowered the taste. Much to my relief, the roaring ventilation fan was now blowing in cool evening air. After hosing down a second time in the stall scrubbing with commercial soap, I revived. Matron Cole chuckled. "Find what you're looking for?" I nodded and grinned.

It took a long time for the matrons to put me back together; and even then, my hair was damp. Despite all, I strode confidently back to Deputy Phales desk and took a seat.

"So, your analysis holds up."

"How can you tell?"

"The way you carry yourself. You're one determined lady. The temperature outside reached ninety-eight this afternoon, the highest of the year so far. I suppose you knew it would?"

"It was approaching that when we were at the old jail. So?" He chuckled.

"Ready to go?"

Glowing praise from architectural dilettantes notwithstanding, the third floor of the courthouse is ill-designed to function as a jail. Obviously, it was an afterthought. The flights of stairs leading up to it are a hazard; for want of better ventilation, heat rising from the lower floors remains trapped there making conditions insufferable for staff and prisoners. Even "all-business" Tom Phales must work in shirtsleeves. Though both he and Matron Cole attributed the unbearable heat on the third floor entirely to unusual outside temperatures it is clear to me that improved ventilation would be beneficial to all, particularly so for the prisoners. Limiting their stay to less than five days at most is impractical. With the sudden rise in population due to the war, I seriously doubt whether the extra jail wagon runs to the county farm will compensate for the design problems. By contrast, the old jail is better in all respects; and with modern improvements, should continue in its intended purpose. I didn't need a thermometer to realize it was much cooler inside this massive brick relic during the peak of the afternoon heat.

My conclusions

I finished the final draft of my report on Fräulein Aloisa's escape including my subsequent research. At my request, Deputy Phales had the county locksmith remove the mortise locks from the ironclad door and a cell on the fourth floor of the old jail. In addition to taking photographs of these antiques for the report, Sheriff Smallwood wanted me to identify the maker and assess their value. Ha-ha-ha! Why didn't they examine the cast iron cases? In raised block letters "U.B.I.W." was a give-away: Unity Bluff Ironworks, the first corporate manifestation of Houghton Metalworks & Scrap, founded in 1816 by Cato's great-granddaddy Charles Thomas Houghton, an Englishman. Once taken apart, it proved to be a warded lock almost identical to the illustration on page nine of John Chubb's treatise *On the Construction of Locks and Keys*. Mr. Chubb included in the figure (B) the manufactured key, (C) a burglary tool for making an impression of the wards,

(D) a counterfeit key having bends instead of a bit crafted to avoid the wards, and (E) a lockpick similar to one of our bent steel wires made for avoiding the wards altogether. The Houghton locks had shallow clefts in the cast case making it easier to lift the catch and slide back the bolt. It was not exactly what I imagined on my initial examination but close. All the same, it took only one pick to open it, the simplest. Mr. Garington apprised the value of the lock at a nickel, its antique value was anybody's guess, and all the Houghton locks were larger than the standard sizes available so replacing them is not easy. One must (A) custom order a modern lock to fit the old mortise and cut a new mortise in the door to receive it. (B) Fill in the old mortise or leave the old lock in place minus its working parts, or (C) start afresh with three new doors and standard three-bolt mortise locks. I suspect that the county commissioners would not approve any of these remedies any more than improving ventilation on the third floor of the courthouse. Aside, the iron "institutional" beds are ill-suited for a jail. A violent criminal could fashion a weapon from parts so, for argument's sake, why did Aloise forego that method? While confined in *Cell 16*, the dangerous woman corner of my mind weighed the risks of various forceful alternatives. All would fail, and the likelihood of most ending badly was undeniable. I speculate that even the most impulsive sort would think twice. Even so, Deputy Phales sends those suspected of dangerous tendencies to the cells at the county farm on the first available jail wagon. As for Aloisa, stealth and ingenuity are her strength and style. I admire both qualities and would happily employ them in the service of my country, especially if doing so results in the capture of an adversary.

My treacherous daydreaming during my brief, but very *real*, incarceration, along with fresh revelations about the Houghton mortise locks leads me to the conclusion that the lady could escape all the doors quickly without assistance. Very well, how did she make her way on foot to safe hiding? When Ella and I first observed Aloisa, we watched her walk south on North First Avenue until she disappeared over the rise at Pine Street. The courthouse occupies the southwest corner on Third and Pine. On the Commerce Street side of the same block is the once exclusive Empire, an elegantly appointed four-story apartment building. This French Renaissance Revival treasure with ranks of smokestacks towering above its eaves is still elegant, particularly its foyer and grand staircase, yet the building is woefully in need of modern improvements, and it lacks space for parking automobiles. Regrettably, it's doomed to succumb to modernity at some point. Aside from holdouts from better days, the management rents apartments to tourists and businessmen who intend to visit for at least a month. It comes out cheaper than staying for several weeks in a hotel. At the rear it has a fire escape with landings spanning the length of the wall on three floors. One can easily enter through a window. It's a good fit!

I intend to share my thoughts with Mr. Hennessy. If intrigued, he might release me from the "administrative palace."

Ladies! I'm back; Ella is not. She sent us a couple of post cards. That girl is having a grand time; I'm not. Working in Mr. Hennessy's office offers few opportunities to do anything worth writing about.

The Empire

Mr. Hennessy took our pictures of Fräulein Aloisa, her dashing gentleman, and Joe Niemand to the Empire to inquire with the manager. He didn't recognize Joe, but our key players were Mr. and Mrs. Preston R. Bullard, tourists from Savannah. He was a snappy dresser; she wore black and white, never anything cheerful. Curiously, they hardly used their apartment; and when they did, he often spent days alone. Sometimes the lady stayed gone for several days at a time, returning on

Thursday afternoons. On the weekends, they went out on the town, dragging in before daybreak. So, what did the railroad want with them? His question left Mr. Hennessy flabbergasted! Didn't the manager see the lady's picture in the *Messenger*? He didn't recall. What about the woman who broke jail a year ago? "Is this her?" So, did he remember anything else? Yes, they were in the habit of leaving windows open and took off before the end of their lease. Ah-ha! Mr. Hennessy asked whether they left anything behind. Not a thing. The apartment looked as though they never used it.

When Mr. Hennessy returned to the office, he wanted to know whether 'The Girl' also possesses clairvoyant powers? He didn't understand how the Empire arrived at the top of my list. I didn't have a list.

"It's not clairvoyance, sir. After confirming Ella's supposition that our lady could escape the courthouse jail without help, four hours locked in the lady's cell gave me plenty of time to ponder where she went after slipping out. I would be in her same predicament. How far can a handcuffed lady in a jail dress go unseen? Remembering that she left the station on foot going south toward Commerce, I pondered the possibilities of where the spies would stay during their mission. Not the hotels, all are too busy; not the boarding houses, everybody is into your business; not a room over a store, a lady must pass through alleyways to get to her steps; not the apartments on the Southside rented by our women officers, they must take the trolley: that leaves Sam Culvers' new eight-story apartment building on Commerce, too expensive, and there is a watchman at the desk overnight; and the Empire, pay a month in advance, no questions asked. Being a lady spy attempting to stay steps ahead of the *gendarmes*, I would want a plan to escape somewhere should they catch me. The Empire is perfect: stroll through that picturesque little garden with its bronze statue honoring Titus Sics, our celebrated nobody, ascend the fire escape, and then crawl through the open window. Once inside, I would retrieve my ring of handcuff keys or set of lockpicks. See! I'm wearing mine. It actually holds this troublesome coil in place. When the devilish 'special constables' take me, I'm ready! Next on my list is shedding my 'quality' striped sack, then soak in a mixture of lilac soap powder and baking soda. It doesn't entirely eliminate the jailhouse soap stench, but the combination is unidentifiably nauseating."

"Yes, I noticed. Still, Elizabeth's perfume is worse. She spread that noxious substance everywhere in the building." That's funny! "Very well, I'm impressed, so tell me how you could slip out of town? Let us assume your gentlemen friends abandoned you after the incident on the platform. The deputies, city policemen, harbor patrol, and our detectives have their descriptions. At six o'clock Saturday, the matron will discover that you escaped."

"We know a gentlemen met her at Northeast Depot on her previous rendezvouses, so their comrades encamp in the vicinity. Obviously, they devised an escape route in advance and the mayhem in the terminal gave them a head start. Off County Highway, an unnamed wagon path opposite Haugh Landing connects to Northeast Depot Road. From the convergence of River Street and North Fourth, the distance from County Highway to Haugh Landing is only little over four miles. On foot at a brisk walking pace, it would take an hour and a half. Crossing the river in a skiff is easy."

"How would you get there?"

"Sheriff Smallwood's men were looking for a handcuffed woman in a jail dress hiding in the neighborhoods abutting the business district. I would fix my hair, dress in my office girl attire, and then take my chances walking two blocks down Commerce to First; then, take the trolley to Unity Station, stroll down to River Street, following it through the lower yards, and then onward through

the curve to County Highway. The stretch passing through the swamp might be tricky, but the deputies wouldn't have expanded their search that far."

"I could envision *you* doing that."

"Me? I'd fall back on my acting, assuming the character of a naïve down-on-her-luck chatterbox countrywoman named Nora Anne Foote duped by this big city rascal named Preston Bullard who said those envelopes were love letters to a married woman. Playing silly girl who doesn't know better usually works and I'm nice. Besides, the sheriff has no evidence that I committed a crime, so the judge must cut me loose eventually. Where do we go from here?"

"Major Durant said that your state certification went through." Finally! "I'll send you back to Captain Johnston when Ella returns. Until then, stay here and assist me." I knew it! "Pay a visit to the locomotive shop this afternoon."

The special train

Surprise! Upon my arrival, Mr. Skinner took me out to the locomotive shed and called the mechanics together to make an announcement.

"It gives me immense pleasure to introduce Miss Myrna Levesque, granddaughter of Superintendent James E. Levesque, Sr. "You might recognize her as 'The Girl!' That's right, gentlemen, Mr. McNair's fearless lady engineer who climbs down into abandoned brick drainage tunnels beneath the depot all by herself to make measurements and take photographs" – that's an exaggeration – "and while working for Major Durant, she tricked a violent woman criminal into revealing the destination of her escaped convict lover" – that's definitely an exaggeration! – "and she's no stranger to the shops. Miss Myrna helped when we reworked the valve gear for both cylinders on *Number 435*." I sure did! "That's right, gentlemen, our assiduous draftsman! Despite being no stranger to the ways of the shops, keep in mind that she is a lady of high principles." I am not. "So, watch your language, and no Parson Bungee and Mrs. Jeeters jokes." Ha-ha-ha! After remaining idle for a year, they plan to fire up *Number 435* and run it to the upper yards and back. It takes about eight hours to get a head of steam. The purpose of this test was to check all its steam-reliant mechanisms: the dynamo powering the electrics, the air compressors, the auxiliary engine in the tender powering the stoker, the pumps, the injectors, the sander, and the lubricator. The mechanics were working on the stoker today. I had no idea that Mr. Hennessy sent me to the locomotive shop to observe the reawakening of Mr. Skinner's forever project but having a fleeting opportunity to escape from the office was a delight! Then Mr. Hennessy paid a surprise visit.

"Mr. Skinner expects to be ready for his first trial on Monday. We need it ready for service. I am hoping that you can observe without getting messy, but that might be too much to ask. When inside the workshops, leave your uniform jacket in the office and then put on a mechanics apron, gloves, and cap. Fortunately, your uniform dress is black, but take care of it. Do not set foot outside Mr. Skinner's domain unless you're cleaned up and properly attired as an officer. That said, the Superintendent plans to ride along with you during the trials next week. He wants to sign off on it personally before it enters service on the line."

"Splendid! I can't wait."

"The Superintendent insists upon going along. Having both of you taking a ride on Mr. Skinner's experimental locomotive makes me nervous. Even though these trials do not entail unusual risks, one must always take precautions. Mr. Buchanan is prepared to assume management of the company should something go amiss." Certainly, there's nothing risky about riding along at eighty miles per hour for just one minute.

"I can fore go the trials."

"No, you need to report back to me on its performance. Having an objective person familiar with this machine observing will allay my concerns. I'll need you for the special train, too, if it happens. Both of us are going. We can discuss the particulars at the appropriate moment."

"Alrighty, you can count on me." Special train? That's nice. It must be for a dignitary of some sort if Mr. Hennessy is taking the ride. Mr. Wilson paying us a visit would be grand! I want to see him! Bringing out the glorious 435 will certainly impress if it doesn't break down."

There was room for me to ride along with the crew, providing that I stood and held onto a brass grip inside of the cab. I wanted to do it! Insomuch as train travel for anybody was not without hazards, Mr. Skinner thought it safe enough. Besides that, the first trial was a short run to Wayne City, three hours without stops, and the locomotive was not pulling cars, thus providing the design team a more accurate assessment of the locomotive's performance. Even so, Granddaddy James was more than happy to take on the duties of conductor for a train without cars and only one scheduled stop.

Monday night, Granddaddy James and I entered the locomotive at half-past eleven just as Mr. Cooke, the engineer, was preparing to move it to the upper yards. The behemoth was awake, a cloud of metallic smelling steam surrounded it. It seemed to breathe and hiss like a living creature! Very slowly, the locomotive with tender loaded with sixteen tons of coal and twenty-five thousand gallons of water crept away from the locomotive shops. Wayne City Station is one hundred and twenty-three miles from Unity Station. Our timetable: departure, a half-hour after the northbound overnight express leaves the upper yards; arrival in Wayne City Yards twenty-five-past-three; take on coal and water in twenty-five minutes; departure, *Number 435* follows the southbound overnight back to Unity Depot; arrival, the upper yards at six-thirty. On the stretch between Northeast Depot and Spring Garden Station, a straight ascending grade, Mr. Skinner wanted Mr. Cooke to accelerate to eighty miles per hour for one minute. The whole of the section is on the automatic block system so there's no danger of closing the gap on the express. That sounded exciting!

Half-past midnight: it was time! The northbound overnight was thirty minutes out. Granddaddy James called out the time, Mr. Cooke opened the throttle, and then, a sound so shattering I feared it might rip the fabric of the universe: the deep whistle of the 435. It resounded from all directions into my battered brain. As we rolled through the upper yards, the tower opened the way: switched from this track to its neighbor, to another, forward to another, and then, the great loop connecting to the main line north. The thunderous whistle filled the cool night air with the deep melancholy tone at every crossing. Its brilliant light cut through the night, illuminating a wide path. Mr. McKee, the fireman, seeing my enraptured expression grinned. Beyond the upper yards, the light of the depot diffused into the woods. After crossing the bridge over Old Mill Creek, the tracks pass through lowlands once used for rice cultivation. Here, the railroad embankment is high. Eventually, the topography levels out to a terrace. For about ten miles, we passed through a section of the county known for growing strawberries. In the old days, the hotels of Port Unity served them with chilled cream when they were in season, a special enticement to travelers all but forgotten. Riding in the cab, I couldn't see any of this familiar landscape, but conjuring up its character from my memory was unavoidable. After passing through the small station at Haynes Town, we pushed headlong to the Northeast River Railroad Bridge, then through Northeast Depot in Laine County at thirty miles per hour! The cool air rushed in and refreshed me. I felt the split-

second movements of the massive pistons massaging my bones! Mr. McKee nudged his valves to increase the steam passing to the stoker engine inside the tender in preparation for the speed trial. Mr. Cooke had ten miles of straight, level track ahead of him. Gradually, he gave the engine steam, eventually reaching sixty; and then came the rapid acceleration to eighty miles per hour for one minute. He pulled the watch from his pocket and handed it to me.

“When I say eighty, start timing; one minute, no more.” Then, he opened the throttle. That is beautiful, isn’t it?” Seventy-two, seventy-five, seventy-seven! “Here it comes!” Seventy-nine, eighty! “Smooth as silk; not even a shimmy!” I called out the duration in increments of ten seconds until Mr. Cooke proclaimed, “We did it: eighty-two miles per hour! That’s enough!” Immediately, he started pulling back. The locomotive began to lose speed over the next few miles as the two men in concert reset their machine to run at sixty. We passed Ward’s Mill station, and then smoothly decelerated to twenty-five. “There you have it, Superintendent! Without a load, this machine runs smoothly at eighty-two miles per hour easily. I think pulling a train of cars, seventy-five for a short stretch is safe but sixty is a nice speed for an express. As promised, Mr. Skinner and the shops delivered up a locomotive better than any we have on the line.”

Unbelievable! I laughed and then quickly cleared my throat. That was enough childlike delight. Without turning his eyes from his gauges, Mr. Cooke reached back for his timepiece.

“See that, Miss Myrna, we can outrun any of our locomotives easily! Forget about those four-wheeled contraptions.” Granddaddy James put aside his wonder to announce something important.

“We’re exactly a half-hour behind the overnight but need to allow for her stop at Spring Garden. Drop back. We can close the gap five minutes after we pass the bend in the river at Tate’s Landing. On reaching the south end of Wayne City Yards, it can be no later than twenty-five-past-three, lest we wait for the southbound overnight to pass.” The northbound and southbound take on passengers at Wayne City Station from three to three-thirty. “With our tender topped-off, we’ll take the loop around in the yards to bring us behind the southbound by an hour.” No matter: the southbound loses fifteen minutes at Spring Garden and another at Northeast, but the 435 can run at fifty miles per hour continuously until Spring Garden. “Leaving there, the southbound accelerates to sixty to make up time, and so can we.”

The first trial was successful. We arrived back at Port Unity at half-past six. The next trial is from Port Unity to Orchard, 261 miles in exactly six hours; this time, pulling several cars. The northern division of the corridor is double track for 128 miles. This is where we must “thread the needle” between the passenger and freight schedule. Mr. Deschamps found one opening but it requires precise timing. The automatic block system of the main trunk eliminates the risk of collisions; however, our train cannot wait on turnouts, nor can we cause a cascade of delays in the busy freight schedule.

The second trial was Thursday last; destination, Orchard Depot at the northernmost terminus of the line. Here, our company shares the station with the connecting railroads; and through a joint agreement, the other companies have workshops within the depot. This time *Number 435* pulled two baggage cars containing miscellaneous supplies for our offices at Orchard and a recently refurbished first-class car. Granddaddy James and I were riding in the latter. During the trip to Orchard, Mr. Menander Jones, the conductor, was riding in the cab. My assigned post was in the first-class car. I had the opportunity to watch while we took on coal and water at Wayne City, but frequently napped. It was like taking the overnight express. Nevertheless, the “threading the needle” part was still exciting. From Wayne City Yards to Pittman’s Station, the crew raced forward at seventy-five miles per hour to make up the half-hour spent taking on coal and water. At Pittman’s

Station, the tower switched our train from the west track of the main north-to-south corridor to the east track to avoid having to stop for a southbound freight. At Walnut Grove Depot, the last stop for the northbound overnight express, we return to the west track. At this point, we made up our lost half-hour, arriving on time at half-past six in the morning. The locomotive crew spotted the cars in the passenger yard and left the locomotive at our Orchard shops until needed. During the interim, *Number 435* will receive maintenance and undergo inspection before setting out for Port Unity. After Mr. Cooke completed his paperwork pertaining to the performance of our machine, Granddaddy James and I spent the weekend at Whitfield's Hotel and then returned home on the afternoon express. We arrived at nine o'clock Monday evening.

Number 435 passed the two trials. It is the fastest locomotive in the company inventory, but also well-designed and resilient. On inspection, none of its mechanisms showed signs of wear. All the same, Mr. Skinner wanted his mechanics to make a more extensive examination. That was going to take some time. Granddaddy James signed off but felt the locomotive must remain in reserve. I returned to Mr. Hennessy's office to resume work on "something-or-other and whatnot." Drats!

Ella returns Saturday evening. Hurrah! I can hardly wait to hear about her adventures. I have a few to share, too!

Valuable lessons

Ella is back! So, let's hear about her schooling with Miss Maude. First off, she learned how to drive an automobile like a champion daredevil: uh-huh, swerving this way and that, off the road, dodging trees, and fast, ever faster! Everything Frank taught her about safe driving went out the window! I don't think he needs to know about it. Then there was the *mean* fighting lessons: nothing sporting, underhanded and vicious. She picked up a lot about getting the better of the fellows: kicking, biting, gouging, clubbing, busting you know what! The Major instructed her in the proper methods of self-defense, so he doesn't need to know. Ella did a lot of running. She climbed out windows, shimmied down pipes, played catch-me-if-you-can, escaped ropes and locked rooms – sounds like fun! *[I was reluctant to attempt an underwater escape, but Miss Fitzgerald-Ramseur went first to show me how to accomplish the feat. After a few tries, I was good enough to avoid the fate of Fred Wheeler.]* I found the most interesting lesson was learning how to use sound, movement, smell, and other sensations when blindfolded to determine where kidnappers are taking me. I know the train schedules by heart so hearing the whistles gives me a general idea of place and time in our section of the county; however, I never thought about keeping track of the turns, bumps, smells, the warmth of sunlight, and whatnot, well, because I could see; but from now on, I'll pay closer attention. Additionally, Miss Maude taught her to be alert for rascals following, places where they might be waiting, and how to work out running off in the right direction. Why didn't Mr. Hennessy send me, too? At least, I can learn all of it from Ella along with more of her subtle trickery.

Myrna was terribly busy while I was gone! Uncle Roscoe was impressed by her presentation on how "Aloisa" used the bed wires to make lockpicks and then continued in a thorough fashion studying the antique door locks until there was no doubt the lady escaped on her own. Not satisfied with that, Myrna figured out where she went after escaping the jail. That my sister spent four hours locked up in a cell isn't surprising. Stepping into the situation to bring her imagination to bear upon a problem is her style. Finally, she took a ride in the cab of Number 435. Our silly overly high-spirited girl is having a productive summer, garnering accolades from the likes of usually indifferent Deputy Phales. Monday, we are back in the station police office with Captain Johnston.

I want to resume sending Myrna out dressed as a passenger. She and Officer Dudley would make an excellent team.

A challenging escape

Ella dreamed up a devilishly difficult parlor trick to entertain our classmates. It's elegantly simple: two parallel eight-inch lengths of three-eighths inch-wide twisted link steel chain connected at center by an ordinary welded link. To make them seem familiar, they are silver plated giving them a jewelry-like appearance. Each adjusted length of chain is secured snugly around a wrist with one of the miniature padlocks from her collection – literally, connected adjustable locking steel bracelets, or as she calls them “chancy trinkets.” Though my sister is proficient in escaping from most handcuffs [*and soon, a straitjacket*], for her “ladylike escapes,” she uses commonplace domestic items such as ornamental cord, silk scarves, hair ribbons, and thin gleaming chains secured with polished heart-shaped padlocks. All the tricks involve freeing her hands – that's it! However, sometimes her thumbs and index fingers are tied together making it more difficult to loosen knots. No matter: rubbing her hands with oily lotion before performances makes it easier to slip her digits free.

As for me, it's mostly sleight-of-hand and juggling. Despite my locksmithing and tool making, I've never worked up an escape routine. (My recent demonstration doesn't count.) On the contrary, I'm a nice lady who has a knack for getting herself into binds with handcuffs. Ella wants to change that. She gave Liz and me our own chancy trinkets. [*Uncle Roscoe wants Liz to learn how to escape from kidnappers, too. With Myrna as a fellow student, both of them might wind up in a predicament.*] Here is the chancy part: the pair of padlocks and their keys are concealed inside little silk pouches. Some are easy to pick, and others are more challenging, for example, the William Bohannon No. 71. Picking a tiny lock is difficult enough, but when your hands are chained so close together it is considerably more taxing. The harder you work to pick a complicated lock, the more discomfort the chain inflicts upon the full extent of both arms. The only way to become good at this escape is mastering a complicated sequence of movements involving both hands and arms to position the lock so it's accessible and immovable, then pick it one-handed exerting the proper pressure. Furthermore, you must know the lock well, and be able to pick it before attempting the escape. We are making progress, but nowhere near attempting the feat with our hands locked up behind our backs. That will take many hours of practice. Ella envisions demonstrating her skills by allowing a member of her audience to blindly select the set of locks for the trick. If we can do that, picking locks with free hands to make our getaway should be easier.

Aside, Liz is considering buying her own strong tiny padlocks for her chancy trinkets since they might prove useful in a rush as an extra pair of handcuffs. The eight-inch length is sufficient to encircle the wrist of the average size man. While nearly inescapable with good locks, it's only useful on compliant individuals. Being an easy catch, her childhood sweetheart Luke fits the bill – ha-ha-ha! Like our fellows, he's away at the war. You can't tell me that there isn't something between them. Liz sends him letters. If he makes it back, they might come together nicely. As for Mr. Hennessy, she's wasting her time. He's not the marrying sort. Most ladies can sense when a man is set in his ways. Liz is too headstrong to indefinitely pretend to be what she is not for his benefit.

A dangerous mission

Wednesday morning, Mr. Hennessy threw me for a loop. He told me to go home, pack my overnight bag with two fresh uniforms and lady things, along with my watch on the long guard

chain, and then meet him on the platform at half-past eleven. We were taking the afternoon express to Orchard. On leaving the house, I retrieved two small pokes of ginger snaps and a tin of sardines from my cache to stuff in my skirt pockets in the event the boss wants to forego a meal until we reach Orchard. That's six hours! He always wants to dine at *Whitfield's*. The only reason why he thinks the food is so good is he's starving. Why must I suffer the eccentric dietary habits of another eccentric?

Upon arriving on the platform, the Major handed me an officer's leather satchel to carry on my shoulder. It contained a revolver and two boxes of ammunition. Why did I need another firearm? He didn't know, orders from the boss. So, where is he? Minutes before the express departed, Mr. Hennessy strode up. Goodness! He was wearing his sidearm. So, what is he keeping from me?

"Let's not dilly-dally, Myrna. We're riding in the second baggage car. I'll explain our assignment in time. Everything is ready at Orchard. If this goes smoothly, we might be home tomorrow morning. It depends upon the punctuality of our client. What's in your pockets?"

"Dinner, sir."

"Excellent! Those who plan ahead never let their ambitions supplant bare necessity." What? "I was hoping to stop in at Whitfield's, but we have little time to waste. No need to load your revolver until after we meet with Captain Bowden. He will have coffee and sandwiches." What about the dining car?

Six hours later, I was testy. A contingent of somberly dressed government men ate all the sandwiches. Captain Bowden sent a station officer to fetch more. These rascals emptied the coffee pot, too, so they expected me to make more. The station officer manning the desk quickly snatched the pot from the burner before I uttered something offensive in French, say, '*tu es la porte arrière d'un cheval*.' No? When the coffee was ready, the station officer was so kind to fill my cup first. Isn't that nice? After Mr. Hennessy finished conferring with Captain Bowden, he took me out on the front porch of the station officers' headquarters. Before he could say a word, the officer sent to get more sandwiches came up the steps.

"Which one of you is Officer Levesque?" Mr. Hennessy motioned to me. The fellow shoved the sack into my arms. "Take these over to the men in the locomotive." Obviously put out, he slammed the door after entering. Mr. Hennessy shook his head, and then removed a sealed envelope from his coat pocket.

"This is your copy from Mr. Deschamps. He calculated speed for every leg of the route and what time you need to be where. Don't lose it! This train is running without stop to Wayne City Yards so any deviation from the timetable will leave our train on a turnout waiting for traffic to pass. That leaves it vulnerable. Mr. Cooke will need to know what to do; call it out as we go. That makes you the *de facto* conductor of this train. You received the proper training, you passed the test, so here is your chance at some practical experience." My mouth dropped! "Furthermore, on seeing any obstruction on the track or sensing something is amiss, you are authorized to stop the train and investigate. If it is unadvisable to proceed, follow the established procedures: torpedoes, fuses, lanterns, and so forth. Mr. McKee will assist."

"Is Mr. Wilson on this train?"

"No, we are carrying valuable cargo and an important passenger who will remain unnamed. Mr. Creswell and his associates are our clients." Oh-no, we're in trouble now. "There are many reasons why I selected you to come along, but foremost you are the designated agent of the company in this arrangement."

“Who designated me?”

“Your grandfather.”

“Oh, the contract. Let me see, ‘if transporting the client’s cargo endangers the locomotive, rolling stock, personnel, company property of any kind, or any individual travelling our line, along with bystanders and residents in close proximity to company property,’ I am authorized to cancel the contract. What’s the cargo?”

“Ask him. All I know is that it is valuable enough to bear the expense of contracting a special train to carry it a mere 261 miles.”

“Who else wants this valuable cargo?”

“Ask him. He would not need a platoon of armed men unless somebody coveted it. Travelling continuously by night offers no opportunity to mount an assault on the train, except when we stop to take on fuel and water in Wayne City Yards. Even there, the state police will cut off access to the area before our arrival, the station patrols will guard the perimeter, and Mr. Creswell’s men protect the train. You protect the engineer and fireman. I have confidence in you.” I imagine so. He knows a derailment at high speed would kill both of us. This valuable something had better be worth the risk. “Best get situated in the locomotive before they couple on the cars. We have it in our roundhouse across the way. Do you need a station officer to escort you?”

“No! I am fed-up with Captain Bowden’s gruff codgers. Letting those government men treat me in a loutish fashion doesn’t set well. I’m no stranger to humiliating situations but those who preside over my embarrassment are attentive to my feelings. Have you eaten?”

“Not yet.”

“Goodness! Take a sandwich.”

Walking across the yard in the dark was tricky. The lights in the machine shop glared making it difficult to be confident of my steps. Facing its open door was a transfer table, and one had to cross a busy array of tracks to get to the locomotive shed. Freight trains passed through at regular intervals, and yard engines were shunting cars. A young gentleman from the machine shop confidently led me through this terrifying maze of movement, often stepping ahead of a locomotive, leaving me with what seemed to me feet to spare. I sighed with relief upon reaching the threshold to the locomotive shops. Before I could thank him, he bound across the way, and a passing freight obscured him. Nobody, not even Captain Bowden, told me that a tunnel passed under the tracks! After showing my credentials to the station officer posted at the roundhouse, I stepped inside the immense enclosure. Through the cloud of steam venting from the *Number 435*, Mr. Cooke emerged.

“Myrna Levesque! Who got you mixed up in this foolishness?”

“Guess! I have sandwiches.”

“Is he riding along?”

“Yes. I’ll be your conductor. Let’s take a moment to glance over our schedule.”

Mr. Deschamps called the special train “Overnight Express Southbound Additional” to give any employee who needed to know the impression that heavy passenger travel necessitated the run. This had happened previously during the busy travel seasons. The only difference in the schedule was our train set out a half hour later and the only stop was Wayne City. The real southbound overnight stopped at Walnut Grove and Pittman’s Station so the tower at each place must switch us to the other track of the main trunk, west-to-east and then east-to-west; otherwise, we would be on the same track of the northbound at Pittman’s. Neither train could proceed. The journey for Wayne City to Port Unity match that of the first of the trials, namely following the southbound.

Mr. Creswell and his associates loaded the cargo before a yard engine shunted our cars from the west corner of the yard to our locomotive. Momentarily, we were ready to get underway. Mr. Hennessy came to fetch me for the signing of the contract.

"Brilliant; that is, it was. Look at that! Mr. Creswell stationed his sharp shooters on the car platforms! Tell him to keep them inside until we are out of the depot. It's nothing short of a spectacle." I took hold of the railing of the ladder on the cab of the locomotive and started to descend. After climbing down halfway, Mr. Creswell strode into view. Oops! He heard me.

"That I will, Miss Levesque. Ready to finalize our contract?"

"What is your cargo, sir?"

"I'm not at liberty to provide you specifics. However, it is not explosives, poison gas, firearms, nor precious metals, gemstones, currency, stock certificates, or bonds. I could add more to the list but that would grow tiresome. Rest assured, it is inert and has no value in the marketplace. Does that allay your concerns?"

"Very well, who is the "important passenger" who is travelling with you?"

"Step back to our car and I will introduce you."

No! It was financier and "secret agent" Simon Parks. Uh-huh, Ladies, the fellow the spies wanted to snatch. Well, it looked like Mr. Creswell was well-prepared to repel an assault. I'd say several! Rifle-toting government men packed the passenger car. Besides that, the only stop was at Wayne City. There, the enemy faced a greater force. Mr. Creswell signed, I signed; good enough, we're going for a ride. I return to the cab of our locomotive.

At half past midnight, the semaphores signaled proceed-clear. We lumbered forward through expansive Orchard Yard to the main trunk. From the moment the *Number 435* pulled out of the train shed at Orchard Depot, my delight in its magnificence returned: the power, the noise, the vibrations, the speed; racing through the night with its precious cargo. About thirty miles out, Mr. Cooke asked,

"Do you really think somebody will try to stop us?" I replied with a question.

"Where?"

"Well, if they try to block the tracks, it is going to be too bad because by the time we see what they have out there, too bad, no time to stop. We might as well give her more steam and bust through. If they derail us, those people we are pulling aren't going to make it. Everything back there, bashed up! Might kill the fellow who did it, when we go tumbling and sliding for who knows how far. It's not likely they'll try that. When we stop, that's their chance; but that tender is double size. We just proved it can take us a long way!"

"It is our choice where we stop."

"Right you are! In a city depot, we'll have all sorts of help. They'll come in a jiffy if those riflemen we're carrying open-up. Now, in the sticks, where the roads are bad and the telephone lines haven't come, we can up-and-go before anybody gets there to put up a fight."

"That's true. Nobody can stop us unless they are already on the train."

"Any idea how they would go about doing that?"

"No. Are we close to Walnut Grove?"

"Yep; by my estimate we're about to thread the needle." A light appeared in the distance. "That's a northbound freight. It left there about a quarter-hour ago. The southbound must be on her way to Pittman's. I'm throttling back." After we passed the freight, Mr. Cooke cut our speed in half. Thereafter, the lights of Walnut Grove Yards came into view. The semaphores on the signal bridge gave us proceed-clear on the east track. "Here is where they switch us over. We'll take this

stretch slower to be a half-hour behind the overnight when they bring us back at Pittman's. Cross your fingers that the fellows at Wayne don't switch us onto that loop. We'll go past our coal and water, ending up out in the sticks."

"That's where they'll get us."

"Well, Miss Levesque, what would your granddaddy do?"

"He'd make sure we were taking the track into the yards even if it meant stopping altogether to take a look-see at the rail points. Given our special cargo and the several switches back-to-back branching off into the yards, losing a few minutes is better than travelling out beyond the state police perimeter. If somebody tampered with the relay boxes, we would get a proceed-clear signal going into the loop, while at the other end, the freight from Tate's Landing also has proceed-clear."

"That's right! We're stopping."

At Pittman's Station, the tower switched us back to the west track. According to Mr. Deschamps, we were on time. After leaving the main trunk, the southbound was a half-hour ahead, continuing to Wayne City Station at the first switch. We enter the yards by the same track but at the second switch proceeding on what eventually becomes the loop. The next switch takes us to the coal and water station. A saboteur must work fast to defeat it. Electric switch locks stop unauthorized movement of the switch, and a bell in the signal tower rings if the rail points are not in their correct position. Furthermore, he must reverse the relay wires to the semaphores to produce a false signal. It would take two expert electricians having extensive experience with track circuitry to pull off the ruse. If Mr. Creswell did not bring along Simon Parks, I would not consider the risk of discovery worthy of the effort. There was another aspect to the plot that was equally diabolical: after we passed the switch leading to the station, the tower restored it to that position to allow passage of the northbound overnight to the main trunk. We could not back out without alerting the tower crew using a telephone call box. Saboteurs clever enough to defeat our switch most assuredly would cut the wires of the nearest call boxes to insure the effectiveness of their trap. So, what could we do? Break out the lanterns and fusees to alert nearby traffic of a stopped train, sprint out on the loop to put down torpedoes to warn the oncoming freight (me), and stop the semaphores from giving a false signal.

Upon our approach to the switch, the semaphores indicated proceed and the block was clear. When we stopped, Mr. McKee and I scrambled down from the cab and ran ahead to the switches. Indeed, the rail points remained positioned to send us onto the loop. I yelled out to Mr. Cooke, "Sabotage! It's sending us into the sticks!" Immediately, Mr. Cooke handed down our lanterns and fusees; and to me, several torpedoes to place on the tracks. It takes a good distance for a freight train to come to a stop, so I set off racing against time in the darkness treading the pathway between the ballast and ditch. Meanwhile, the government men poured out of their car, assuming their position to defend the train. Mr. Hennessy dashed up to Mr. McKee.

"Why are we stopped?"

"Somebody sabotaged this switch!" Soon Mr. Creswell joined them.

"We can't just sit here!" Mr. Hennessy told him to have one of his riflemen shoot out the lamps in the semaphore. Goodness! Needless to say, losing the signal lights would trip a relay activating an alarm bell in the switching tower. About the time I heard the crack of rifle fire, the whistle of the northbound sounded. It was leaving the station. The semaphore behind our train signaled stop. No backing out of this box now! Mr. Cooke gave a resounding blast from the *Number 435*. I wrapped the first two torpedoes around the rails at what felt to me to be a quarter mile. Advancing forward, a crosstie tripped me up, I stumbled forward, and my lantern went out. Drats! When I looked up, I saw the brilliant beam of the freight in the distance. Quickly, I scrambled up, and

attempted to place my remaining two torpedoes. I cut it close! The engineer applied the brakes, the couplers of his cars banged sequentially, and the train eventually came to a stop. Hurrah! I trudged alongside the long train of cars back to bedlam. Mr. Creswell's deceptions fell away. The effort to devise a complex run on short notice required the skill of the staff within several departments of our company, thus presenting more occasions for the secret plan to become known to many. Within minutes of my return, several automobiles converged on our location from both sides, another surprise Creswell didn't tell us about.

"The state police; where did they come from?" Grumbling, Mr. Hennessy answered.

"Wayne City Yards, but others were assigned to Walnut Grove, Pittman's, and points in between to counter an assault... except here."

"When did you find out about this, sir?"

"After we left Orchard."

"What else did he tell you?"

"That's all! Mr. Creswell was unwilling to reveal more, and I have serious doubts as to whether anything he tells me is more than part-truth." On hearing this, I was furious! Somebody wanted a train wreck! Quickly, I dispelled the thought. We had enough time to avert it. Bottling us up on the loop was their goal. So, what about the assault? Something went amiss. I suspect stopping to examine the switch threw off their timing. "We'll talk about this later. I need to find a telephone box. Let Mr. Deschamps determine what happens next."

I waited by the locomotive for a half-hour before Mr. Hennessy returned. A track crew and electrician followed a brief time later to repair the switch and semaphore. Before that, however, the company inspector on duty filled out a report and took photographs, and the yardmaster told us to move our train to a disused warehouse in the western sector of the freight yard. When we arrived, the state police were present in numbers on its platform. For the moment, secrecy was impossible. After the crew uncoupled *Number 435* and took it to the locomotive shop for a going over, I joined Mr. Hennessy in the yardmaster's office for a discussion and breakfast. The interruption of our journey cost us more time than it took to fix the switch. A general inspection of the switches and signals at the Wayne City yards commenced immediately after it was determined sabotage had occurred. We could not continue. The period of sparse traffic expired. Mr. Creswell wanted to get our train off the main line. That was his intention all along. The risk of crash or derailment was now an overriding consideration rather than a mere possibility. Mr. Deschamps devised a route through the sparsely populated rural landscape southeast on a branch line. It was an oblong loop over a hundred miles ending at Spring Garden Depot on the main line, complete with curves and dips. We couldn't take it fast. There were two stations; the roads in the entire area were either unimproved or primitive. The interior had no electric or telephone lines. In some respects, it was advantageous for our purpose. A saboteur would have difficulty negotiating the hodgepodge of roads and could not move quickly. The last freight of the day on this line arrived at Wayne City yards at five o'clock in the afternoon. We could leave before dark. Mr. Hennessy supported the choice of route. Agent Creswell was furious that the state police could not stage anywhere in the densely forested section of Laine County where the tracks followed the river. Mr. Hennessy pointed out that neither could our adversaries. Despite the route's advantages, I could only recall that Aloisa and her associates hid out in the area, along with Sheriff Jackson's elusive bootleggers and "backwoods boys."

I slept in the station infirmary undisturbed until a quarter past ten. The crew dosed briefly inside an office in the car shop and then took our locomotive around to the coal and water station. After an inspection, they returned it to the track fronting the disused warehouse. Station officers

and one of Creswell's sharpshooters guarded it. Mr. Hennessy was up all night overseeing the investigation of the sabotaged switch. I didn't see him until early afternoon. Mr. Deschamps took the early mail train to Spring Garden to meet us with a secret revision for the last leg of the journey. Upon making myself presentable, I made my way through the yards to the locomotive. Nothing appeared out of place. The cars were off receiving an inspection under heavy guard. When a yard engine shunted them onto our track, a somber detail of government men paraded alongside conspicuously, rifles at the ready. Silliness! I climbed up to the cab of the locomotive with the timetable in hand. This time, I had my satchel in the cab toolbox in the event somebody relieved me of my pistol.

A quarter of seven came. Mr. Creswell and his party arrived at the warehouse with a state police escort, and then wasted no time boarding. Mr. Hennessy joined them. A flagman gave us the signal to advance through the yards. The wheels inched forward, and the old rails creaked; then, the monster slipped away from the platform. Mr. Cooke broke into my melancholy. "Here's where we switch. All clear, and we're through!" Our progress through the yard was smooth, and then we set out on a tour of the ghastly industrial landscape on the fringes of the city. The massive, long, dingy brick palaces of sweaty, greasy labor cast long shadows. The sun, still high on the horizon, reflected dull in a thousand panes of glass never cleaned. Towering smokestacks belched clouds of acrid gasses; and everything natural appeared to be sick. It was like Orchard Depot without the romance, only the dirt, steam, and smoke. What if I was a mill girl? I saw a few of them: wearing aprons over homespun and calico, each carrying a lunch bucket. Day upon day upon month upon year tending a loom, changing out spools, would that destroy my spirit? The last of the buildings was a brickyard and kiln, and the road paralleling the tracks ended. Here we go! "We're clear."

We glided in awesome splendor through open fields; some approaching harvest, others sporting tufts of wild grass. Farmhouses and outbuildings were set away from the track and crossings were few. Mr. McKee called out "Mile marker 115. We could be in Spring Garden by ten o'clock running at this speed." The track was not up to it, and he knew it. I removed the ridiculous uniform tie and unbuttoned my collar. Soon the vibrations from the hammering pistons began to take possession of my core, and I gazed out upon a golden sunset. In time, twilight ebbed into dusk and then a clear starry night. The dim light in the cab washed most of them out. "Mile Marker 80. We are approaching the first water and fuel station. There is no need to stop, here or the one at Mile Marker 20." We wanted to get to Spring Garden without delay. "Mile Marker 70; forty-two miles per hour! Ahead was the spur to the lumbermill. Want to stop?"

"Take the switch slow." We passed through it without incident. Once again, I settled into quiet tension, my senses still alert to any hazard ahead. About five minutes later, Aloisa pressed a pistol into the small of my back. How she accomplished the stealthy feat flawlessly in the dark dumfounded me. On her lips was a superior smirk. I could only shake my head. The lady was besmudged with coal dust. Clever! She climbed into the tender, hid in the coal, and then used the ladder on the front of the tender to creep down behind us. That was impressive!

"I remember you! Please give me your firearm." What else could I do? "Ah! That's a nice one!" She slipped it into her cloth satchel and then removed the tagged cuffs she wore in *Cell 16*. (Uh-huh, her "charm bracelets.") "I have these for you." Oops! She had me cuff my hands through the grip on the inside of the cab. "Good girl. Sorry, I don't have a key."

"I know." She then searched for other weapons hidden inside my many pockets. Although I couldn't reach inside them, the gentlemen might when her attention was focused elsewhere. Finding nothing other than my pocketknife, she was satisfied that I was harmless, or so she thought.

I had something to turn the tables: my hairclip pick, and the revolver in my hidden satchel. Now, when do I use them?

“Good evening, gentlemen.” She smiled. “Please stop at the forty-eight-mile marker.” When we arrived, she ordered Mr. McKee out of the cab to uncouple the cars. The government men were surging forward illuminating their way with three of our lanterns. He waved them back.

“Stop! A daredevil woman will shoot Myrna and Mr. Cooke if you come further.” Mr. Creswell called them back.

“It’s a diversion! Assume defensive positions! They’re in the woods!” After cutting loose the cars, Mr. McKee returned to the cab. Aloisa pointed her pistol at Mr. Cooke.

“Go!” He opened the throttle, and we left the gentlemen behind to fend off the assault. Less than a mile removed we heard rifle fire. “Don’t worry about them! Just go! Stop at the twenty-two-mile marker!” When we stopped, she turned to me. “Farewell, miss, sorry to leave you locked up. We might meet again someday. Have a pleasant evening, gentlemen.” I interjected.

“One moment please. Who were the men shooting at your friends?”

“Criminals! They work for the enemy.”

“Who is your enemy?” She laughed and then climbed out of the cab. Goodness! The war is here. Within seconds, I unlocked one of my cuffs and then retrieved my revolver. On reaching the opening of the cab, I fired a shot into the air, and then took aim at her silhouette.

“Stop where you are!” She froze in her steps. “Make a move and I’ll shoot! Turn around, drop your pistol and bag, and then walked toward me.” Once she gripped the ladder of the cab, I asked Mr. McKee to fetch the lady’s things. Needless to say, he trained the pistol on her. “Come inside!” Only when she was in the cab facing three firearms did I consider picking the other cuff. *Voila*, now her turn. “Here, I am returning your bracelets. They’re a good fit. I have a lovely pair just like them.” After securing her hands to that dandy grip on the wall of the cab, I told Mr. Cooke to put the locomotive in reverse and save the gentlemen from their pickle.

When we arrived at the cars, we found Mr. Parks safe, Mr. Creswell received a graze on his arm, the boss had cuts from a car window when it shattered above his head, a government man had a minor wound on his leg, and two of Aloisa’s comrades were loading their wounded into the passenger car. The captured ambushers were “backwoods boys,” not skilled warriors by any measure! Mr. Hennessy told me that the whole affair started when their leader, Preston Bullard, demanded that Mr. Creswell surrender Parks. Somebody fired a shot and the government men let loose a volley into the trees. In turn, the ambushers returned fire with small arms and shotguns as they retreated. Within a few minutes, it was over. Bullard and most of his men fled. So, what do we do with Aloisa? Mr. Hennessy told me to hand her over to Sheriff Jackson along with the expendable hirelings when we arrived at Spring Garden. They committed crimes against the railroad. Furthermore, she faced charges in Sheriff Smallwood’s jurisdiction. Mr. Creswell could wait for his chance.

When we arrived at Spring Garden, we found a relieved and thoroughly bewildered Sheriff Jackson and Mr. Deschamps. Mr. Creswell left six men with the sheriff, three wounded who needed a doctor and three to assist him with guarding Aloisa. I napped in an office in the station. Later, the ticket agent brought me pie and coffee. While the doctor patched up the boss, Mr. Deschamps recalculated our timetable. The choice was obvious: follow a half-hour behind the southbound overnight, switch to the outer spur below Haynes Town, and arrive at the South Docks military yards. “After completing the paperwork, we leave the cars inside the gate.” Leave the cars? I wanted a receipt! Mr. Creswell gave us one along with a signed agreement to pay for the repairs. After congratulating me on capturing Aloisa, he suggested that I consider joining his team.

“My life is exciting enough as it is.”

The rest of our journey proceeded without incident. That was it! On returning to the terminal, Mr. Buchanan had a conniption! He assigned me to Captain Johnston for the remainder of the summer. Hurrah!

Myrna and Uncle Roscoe returned from the “inspection” Saturday afternoon. To see my uncle’s head wrapped in bandages and his immaculate suit wrinkled as though he slept in it was shocking. Aside from wild hair and grease smudges on her forehead, Myrna was uninjured. So exhausted, she went immediately to her “new” bed in the basement workshop. I handed her a basin and towel on the way down. Uncle Roscoe said they ran into a little difficulty on the way home. In short, a band of criminals set upon stealing a valuable shipment ambushed them. Myrna foiled their attempt to misdirect the train at Wayne City Yards and captured a woman who climbed into the cab of the locomotive. He and some government men repelled the assault with gunfire. Regardless, the company fulfilled its obligations by delivering the shipment to the military yard on the South Docks. Mr. Levesque asked whether Myrna was alright. He chuckled. “She’s fine. A good night’s rest and our girl will be back to the usual things.” He was going home to work on his report. I imagine Liz will rush over to assist. This morning, Myrna stuffed herself at breakfast, and then vowed to never travel with Uncle Roscoe without bringing along a lunch pail. She then heaped praises on him for his gallantry in the face of danger. If Liz came over, he’ll be fending off more.

Aloisa escapes

Once again, our auburn-haired lady “Aloisa” outwitted her captors. This time not by fashioning lockpicks but through brute force and stealth. When the matron brought her meal, she slammed the lady into the bars rendering her unconscious. [Aloisa took the matron’s clothes, leaving her hogtied and gagged with strips of a bed sheet.] The matron who arrived in the morning thinks she left unnoticed through the front door, slipping past the deputy on duty and the government men patrolling outside. Sheriff Jackson sent his deputies out with dogs, but they lost her scent a few miles from town. [Sheriff Smallwood is furious!]

The Messenger could not abstain from pressing Uncle Roscoe for a statement after the Wayne City Mercury published an article describing the heroics of a “fearless lady railroad detective” who “single-handedly” foiled saboteurs’ attempt to cause a collision between an early morning freight and a “government train” ... “at great risk to her life.” Additionally, the Laine County Courier reported on the failed “train robbery” and the capture of “a dangerous woman criminal participating in the plot” by “Mr. Roscoe Hennessy’s remarkable protégée Miss Myrna Levesque.” Uncle Roscoe consulted with Mr. Creswell, who was still stumbling through the backwoods with Sheriff Jackson in search of the “bandit’s hideout.” He told my uncle to tell the press that the train was transporting a shipment of government silver. No mention of Simon Parks, foreign espionage, or the plotters’ ability to circumvent his “barriers of secrecy.” [Secrecy? Ha-ha-ha! Why didn’t the government men catch Aloisa climbing into the coal bunker of our tender? How did the rascals catch wind of our change of route in enough time to mount an assault? Finally, how could Aloisa get past the three government men posted around the Laine County Jail? Think about that!] Mr. Creswell counseled Uncle Roscoe to accentuate Myrna’s heroics in any statement he prepares for the press. She discovered the sabotaged switch in time to stop a catastrophic collision and outwitted a dangerous criminal. Today’s morning Messenger featured her story, most of it true, all verified by credible individuals but included a list of her other remarkable accomplishments: discovering the Haynes Tomb, designing improvements to Number 435, saving Mr. Bradley when

the coal chute opened, pulling Sargeant Quince out of the line of fire, participating in Captain Johnston's maneuver to take the rifleman out of the terminal, and foiling Marcia Lamb's plan to rob the ticket office. Sheriff Smallwood praise was bountiful. "That Miss Myrna Levesque provides an indispensable service to my department is undeniable!" What followed was an exciting narrative of her adventure [written entirely by Mr. Hennessy]. The women station officers are so proud of her. [That's enough for one summer! I want a holiday before we go back into cold storage.]

In this instance, practical education (automatic signals and switches, locksmithing, and investigation) merged with some favorite pastimes (tinkering, parlor tricks, and acting) to enable me to barely turn around a life-threatening situation. Aloisa is still much better, particularly her mastery of evasion. I am now convinced that she made a flawless escape from the Annex while Marcia Lamb led the station officers on a protracted chase through the terminal. With preparation and practice, I can become better at escaping locked enclosures and restrains, even the devilish straitjacket, but the mastery of moving about a vigilant world transparent is still perplexing to me. I understand and utilize disguise and misdirection; Ella is skilled at illusion; but Aloisa has the innate stealth and reflexes of a panther. Certainly, there must be technique underpinning it, not instincts.

THE END